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The Bible; its Oneness &c.

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Dec. 1*st*, 1853.

THE BIBLE:

Its Oneness of Mind and Oneness of Design.

BY THE

REV. DAVID LAING, M.A., F.R.S.

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PREFACE.

A FEW words of Preface may be needful. It has been necessary so to compress the argument, that, in seeking to use the fewest words, there is frequent obscurity. The original design was to take each book of both Testaments, and to shew its connexion with, and its support from, the other books of both Testaments. This may be carried out at some future time, as it might be useful to the Bible student, and to teachers of Bible classes.

From very early life, the writer has felt a mistrust of all external evidence. It always came to his mind with the taint of imperfection, belonging to the human being through whom it passed. The Romanist can quote history, and can appeal to history; the Romanist can quote the Fathers, and shew their strength on his side. A knowledge of history, and of the fathers,

enables any one to expose false quotations; but was it designed that man should be at the mercy of his brother man? It was not so designed. "Holy Scripture containeth," we profess to believe upon God's Word, "all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not contained therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or thought requisite, or necessary to Salvation."

The poor man is not left to the dishonesty of his neighbour. Let him take the Bible, and study it with a simple and honest prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit on its pages, and he will find no difficulties in his way,

When man reads that which man has written, he feels at liberty to doubt every fact and every argument; his mind suggests to him, that other minds might have put the matter in a very different form, and drawn very different deductions; he sees imperfection and prejudice, more or less, upon every child of Adam, and he mistrusts the effect of that certain element, which existed somewhere in the man, whose writings he

studies. The hesitation, which belongs thus to every article of faith, or of religious practice, which rests upon human teaching, ceases, when we have the Bible in hand. Here, all doctrine is positive, *and clear:* the things which we call mysteries are self-made. The method of salvation, its proof in the altered heart and life, the sacraments, the day of rest, the arrangements for the government of Christ's people, and for the teaching of every Christian soul; there would be no more difference over these things now, than there will be hereafter, were the same one will, the sole authority, recognized as it is given in the one Word.

It is the effort of this little treatise, to shew that the Bible carries with it the evidence of its own reality, and thus of its perfect authority in all that relates either to doctrine, or to duty.

February 9th, 1854.

THE BIBLE;

&c., &c.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

A DESIGN—MOST COMPLETE WITH MOST MIND—HAS MANY PARTS—DEVELOPED IN AUTHOR'S TIME—LOST PART IMPAIRS DESIGN—A PART IMPLIES A WHOLE—AUTHORSHIP IN WRITING—PART AWAKENS INTEREST IN WHOLE—PARTS OF BIBLE—SAMUEL—EZRA—HEBREWS.

THERE can be no work without a design. Even the weakest mind commencing a work has an object, however the design may be forgotten and the work left undone. As the designing mind is of loftier dimensions, the works will be enlarged in proportion; and less minds will have a difficulty in comprehending the extent of the design, and the machinery for its accomplish-

ment. The author alone can give us the full design; the first thought, in which it had its origin; the steps, by which the design was progressively matured; the manner, in which the design was being secretly advanced, whilst no other mind conceived that it was still in progress. And all this will, of course, be not only true of God, but specially true of God. With the one perfect mind, whence alone all other minds have sprung, there could alone be completeness in the original sketch of the work, which was to be; with that mind alone could there be full completeness in the design, when finished.

And this is the thought of the apostle James, when presiding at the Council of Jerusalem, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." Nothing can be more entirely reasonable than this, which a tainted mind would call beyond reason. It could not have been otherwise. The works were, because God had a purpose; and this purpose He could alone know; and the works would be in simple accordance with this purpose. The works had not been, had there been no design; and they

could only be in accordance with the will, which called them into being. And this embraces, of necessity, "all His works." A design, the offspring of a mind, the effect of a will, must, of necessity, include "all:" to omit a *part* of the work would be to mar the design, which had conceived the whole with all its parts; and this would also, of necessity, be "from the beginning." The mind was before the design, or the design had never been; and the mind had, "in the beginning," before a single portion of the design had existence, before any other mind *was* by which the details could be received—the mind had planned and arranged the order, in which all its several portions should be brought into light.

And it matters nothing, of what *kind* these works of God might be, which were all known unto Him from the beginning. The original design would as much embrace the *written* portions of the plan, as those which were otherwise done. When God saw it better that His design should be unfolded to a certain extent, He would do it in His own way; He would determine what portions to reveal, and at what time to give each

detached portion of light upon that, which He had yet done, and upon that which He was yet about to do. He would choose for the purpose such men—men of such a country, and men of such a temperament—as He judged best suited to His particular purpose; whether the purpose were the general design, or the completion of some isolated portion. Did God see it better to secure the unquestioned authorship of His design; did God foresee, that some men in some age, might pretend that some portions of His plan were matter of accident; He might see it better to make different men, living hundreds of years from each other, foretell the same thing, which would not be for yet many more hundreds of years: or He might give, by inspiration, glimpses of some great coming event, so that one man might see a piece of the future scene some thousand years before the scene should be; and, then, some ages after, another man should see a piece of the same scene, but not the same piece as his brother prophet; so that no man should clearly know how these two men could refer to the same fact, until the fact came "in

the fulness of the appointed time," to shew that God had put the word into the prophets' mouths, and thus that God had pre-arranged the great fact of which they had spoken. And thus would our Bible be as much a work of God, as the world of which it speaks; or as the redemption, which it is written to foreshew and to explain. The Bible, like the world and every other work of God, is known unto God from the beginning; since there had been no Bible, as there had been no world, unless the One Mind had originated its idea, and the divine will had given it being. The same One who said, "Let there be light" for the body, willed the existence of light for the soul. And equally does this truth embrace the *whole: all* the Bible was known unto God from the beginning of the world; since we could no more have one work of God imperfect than another; no more the Bible maimed, or mutilated, than the world. The Bible is equally God's creation, and equally created with a purpose; and for that purpose the inspiring mind saw each portion needed of the one great whole. Who could strike a sun, or a system, from the

heavens, and expect God's universe to maintain ts order? or to achieve the purposes for which He filled the starry heavens? Is the design beyond the range of our minds? The less should we question it—the more readily wonder and obey. Would we destroy a continent, overwhelm with the boundless sea some portion of the habitable world, which seems to us too full of wickedness to remain? We could not expect the world to maintain its balance, nor the world to go on otherwise than as God designed it to be. And we may even extend this view to the governed world. We could not erase from the history of the world the doings of a whole nation, nor the records of an age: they are a portion of that great scheme of government, upon which we shall one day look back with an unclouded interest; when we shall see that no man was a forgotten, nor a useless fragment of the government which has embraced all the history of the world's existence. And the Bible is equally a whole. The Bible had not been, unless it had been as God designed it; and we could lose no portion of it, without affecting the design.

And this, we still repeat, is mere reason, plain common sense. In Paley's old argument of the found watch, which immediately conveys the idea of a maker, and of a maker with a mind, the argument as much embraces *unity* of design as it does the existence of a creating mind. The watch could not have made itself; nor have designed the idea of its own working; and this designed "work" would be known to its author in "*all*" its parts "from the beginning." A wheel of the watch, found without the rest of the works, would equally convey the idea of a designing mind, and the idea of other parts, to which this was necessary. We should at once receive the idea, that, as this wheel could not go by itself, so the whole of the other parts, how many soever, would be equally useless without this absent one.

And, with reference to this portion of God's works, as known unto Him from the beginning in all its parts, we are well acquainted with the nature of design in *writing*, and the manner in which it is displayed; and all the more in our day, on account of the prevailing fashion for

periodical writings. The author arranges his plan in his own mind; and he determines at what periods he shall send out certain portions of it; and none but himself knows which are the material, more or less, points of his design, as he gradually developes his unseen thoughts. And our interest is constantly awakened as we fall casually upon some fragment of a story, which awakens an interest; some strongly marked character, of which we desire to know whence arose its defects and whither they will tend; some exciting event, which kindles a curiosity to know in what extraordinary circumstances it could have its rise; some act of seemingly gross injustice upon the part of one, hitherto respected for unchanging probity; and we satisfy our minds as our reason directs us. We obtain the earlier, or the later, portions of the author's work; convinced that he will clear up the difficulty, which arises from seeing only a portion of his work. And we call these things "creations"—and such they are; creations of a mind, which God created; and we can only estimate the work of the One Perfect Mind, as

we do that of the weak and finite mind, by seeing it as a whole—by carrying every part back into the whole—to understand its bearings upon the whole.

Thus—were we accidentally to meet with the first book of Samuel, without any other knowledge of the Bible, we should at once find, that it was only a portion of some history, which we could not understand without the rest of it. It begins by speaking of a man of a certain country and a certain religion; and we should see that it speaks as if every body, who read, would know all about these particulars. We should ask, Where is Mount Ephraim? What is an Ephrathite? Why do they give us the names of four of his ancestors? And that Shiloh—Why should the man leave his own city once a year to go up to Shiloh? (1 Sam. i. 3.) And then we should find that there was an established worship at Shiloh to "the Lord of Hosts;" "the house of the Lord," (1 Sam. i. 7,) provided with a priesthood, of whom one seems to have had special authority, and with regularly appointed sacrifices. The mind could

not be satisfied without knowing the meaning of all these things. We should soon find that this Lord of Hosts was not a senseless idol, but a Living Being, having communion with men; and that He expressly states, that at a certain time, when the ancestors of these people were in Egypt, (1 Sam. ii. 27,) He had appointed the line of these priests to offer upon His altar. (1 Sam. ii. 28.) The restless mind would almost rend the body to get free, that it might understand this. *When* were those people in Egypt? where are the records, so manifestly known, of that distant day? And why this established service? what the meaning of these sacrifices? why a chosen, why a limited, priesthood? why one priest *alone* to do certain offices? And we should feel all the more earnest in pressing the enquiry, when, as we eagerly read on how the Lord of Hosts dealt with this people—whom he calls "Israel *my* people;" (ver. 29,) we find Him marking these sacrifices as not superseding obedience, as below obedience—"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of

the Lord? Behold! to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams." (ch. xv. 22.) Why, then, any sacrifice at all? And this Israel,—why called God's people? Obstinate, disobedient,—why were they chosen as His people? Why kept as His people, when the power which destroyed the Amalekites could as easily have destroyed them? We should, of course, search for the other portions of the history; in which we should expect to find all the particulars relating to Elkanah and to Eli; and not only why these sacrifices were ordered, but how long they were to last, and what would be the *end* of them. As the Lord of Hosts must have ordered them for a purpose, the later history would tell us when that purpose was fulfilled.

Or, the book of Ezra might be the discovered fragment; so evidently a fragment, although a small one; so evidently speaking of some wonderful and interesting and comprehensive history, that we should long for the full particulars, which the remainder of the history would doubtless give. Cyrus stands as king of Persia, a sufficient description: other history will tell us, who he was

and when he lived; but who is this "Jeremiah," (Ezra i. 1,) whose name comes in, as though everybody knew him? and, moreover, as though everybody knew, that he had said something beforehand of that which Cyrus was about to do? Cyrus speaks in a public proclamation of some command, which he had received from the Lord God of heaven; (ver. 2.) whilst he speaks of the captivity, which had arisen in the time of a king who must have been dead, since his throne was occupied, and of the sayings of an unnamed prophet. Was the word of the Lord by Jeremiah in the first verse, the same as the charge from the Lord God in the second? Where was it on record, that it was so well known?

And, then, why should this Cyrus, to whom God had given, as he says, "all the kingdoms of the earth," why should he send home only *one* captive nation? That it was by God's command would only increase the eagerness of our enquiry. (Ezra iii. 2.) Why is God again described as "the God of Israel?" What was Jerusalem specially to this great God, that this whole people should be sent home to rebuild His

House? (ver. 12.) And, then, we read of "a first house," with which the affections of the people seem to have been closely bound—"the ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy." How do we long for some particulars of that house! And, then, as the people go homeward, we find, again, a whole class of priests, and appointed sacrifices, and set feasts: these things must have had their orderings in some beginning, and their design. And we should feel all the more anxious to know more, because we should find a reference to other writings, which would explain these details, which a mere fragment could not explain. The priests prepared to offer "as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God:" (Ezra iii. 2.) "They set the priests in their divisions . . . as it is written in the book of Moses." (ch. vi. 18.) "They set the priests in their apparel . . . to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David king of Israel." (ch. iii. 10.) Ezra confesses to God, that He had spoken to His people by His "servants the prophets;" (ch.

ix. 11.) and there are two such men *named*, Haggai and Zechariah, as prophesying unto the people at this very time. Had we, then, these other writings, Ezra would be clear; David would tell us, why he was specially earnest in praise; Moses would tell us, why these sacrifices were arranged by him; the prophets would shew us the messages, with which God had sent them; Haggai and Zechariah might give us some details of the *future* of this temple and its Lord. We should not expect this fragment of history clear, unless we had the whole.

Or we may conceive some detached portion of the Gospel thus found, such as the book of Hebrews. Here all is darkness, whilst from the very character of the book at its opening all should be light. It professes to belong to a closing revelation,—to "last days," when God had brought Himself to an immediate communion with His creatures, such as had never before been. In time past He had spoken unto former generations by prophets: in these last days "by His Son . . . the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person, uphold-

ing all things by the word of His power." (Heb. i. 2, 3.) This is a magnificent idea, overpowering and bewildering in its splendor: but it is followed by an expression yet more startling:—"When He had by Himself purged our sins!"—amazing thought! that this Great One should be the one by Himself to purge our sins! We plunge into the book to find it wholly occupied with this idea —"Jesus, who was *made* a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9.) "Forasmuch as the children (of God by creation) are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (ver. 14.) Amazing details for one to read—a sharer of this flesh and blood! The Son, brightness of the Father's glory, *took* this flesh and blood; and He had, therefore, a previous being, and He did this, therefore, by His own will. And yet it was by the Almighty God's appointment, since He was *made* a little lower than the angels, with the

design that He should "taste death for every man." And then, wonderful and absorbing as this thought is, we perceive the object of the book to be, to make it clear to its readers, that this has been an unchanged design from that beginning, when the Son "made the worlds." (Heb. i. 2. i. 10. John i. 3.) The book is almost wholly a book of reference, crowded with quotations from other authors, who appear to have written at different seasons. These are sometimes named, as Moses and David; but, usually, the quotations are so directly assumed to have come from God, that there is no mention of the man, in whose mouth the word may have been placed: "He saith," (Heb. i. 5—8; ii. 12; v. 6,) is the ordinary phrase, and sometimes, "The Holy Ghost saith." (ch. iii. 7; x. 15.) We feel that we are reading a brief summary of things, which have been in course of action for hundreds of years; and all the details of which have been written in the previous works, which the writer quotes so freely, and with which he supposes his readers to be as familiar as himself. We cannot conceive this

writing, but as part of a whole: it would be as absurd to imagine it a complete work, as to suppose the wheel to be the perfect clock. These explanatory references must be very valuable to those, who have the whole plan before them; but they cannot be understood by themselves. The very mention of this last and complete revelation by the Son assures us, that there must be some other record of the fact. Such a thing could not be unhistoried. He, who tasted death for every man, must have had some witnesses of his death. All those prophets who spoke to our fathers in the past, must have had successors. God would not have given so many notices by their mouths of His designs, to leave His accomplished designs without record.

We take the Bible, therefore, as the work of one mind, of which we shall expect to find one main purpose; the purpose of which we cannot expect to find clearly developed in any portion of the plan, or there had been no need for so long a time in its production; but in every part of which we shall expect to find traces of the design, which brought the whole into being. How

far this trace is marked would, we should imagine, depend on the author's design. If the design is to occupy a certain portion of time, there is some reason known to the mind of the one Mover, why the end cannot yet be—why the end cannot be, until that certain definite time, which He has arranged. And, as this is true of the whole, it will be true of each part. If there exists a reason, which requires a considerable length of time before the whole design may be carried through and perfected, the mind, which alone sees this necessity, can alone judge how early or how late the needful steps are to be taken, which shall bring on the destined end.

The design, which God reveals in the Bible, has its declared cause, with which the work commences. It professes to have been written, because sin had found its entrance into the world; and to unfold by degrees the plan which God prepared before sin was, for its full pardon and removal. God foreknew sin, and fore-ordained a mode for its forgiveness. The difficulty lies in His justice. How could a whole race of sinners be forgiven by a just God? How could His justice be

satisfied, when every man had his own sins to meet, and could offer no ransom for his brother? The removal of this difficulty—the mode by which God could be just and yet the justifier of His guilty creatures—is displayed at length. The work required a long time, many ages, for its maturity: why it did so, can, as we have said, be known only to the one, whose mind could embrace the need and the details of so vast a plan. We have, however, the evidence of our own hearts to the fact that sin is there, and that it requires much power for its gradual removal; and we can understand, how the aggregate sins of all human beings might render necessary a gradual scheme of redemption. We perceive, that, when the appointed Saviour came, there was a certain time which He was careful not to hasten; that many things were not done, because His hour was not yet come; and if, when actually born, the Christ might not die before His appointed time, the ordaining mind, which saw the necessity, and which fixed the time for one delay, would see where other delays were needful.

We will now take separate portions of the

Bible—of this complete work of the one Great Mind—and we will endeavour to observe how each portion is necessary to the whole and how each portion is identified with the others. This is one of the best proofs, if not the best, of the reality of the Bible as God's own Word; and thus of the reality of those blessed truths, which we draw thence for the guidance of our lives. We may take the converse of the Apostle's words to the Corinthians: "If Christ be risen, we are not in our sins."

CHAPTER II.

THE PENTATEUCH.

FIRST NATURAL DIVISION—CAUSE OF DESIGN—IMMEDIATE RESULTS—GROUND PLAN LAID—EARLY HOPE — VAGUE, BECAUSE DISTANT — CONCENTRATION OF PURPOSE—ONE PEOPLE—KEPT ONE—LAW OF SACRIFICE—LESSON OF BLOOD—CONTINUING NOTICES—FOUNDATION IMPLIES EDIFICE.

We have taken the general idea, that a mind will act by design; that nothing will be by crea-

tion, or by inspiration, but as the creating and inspiring Mind shall have conceived the need of such works, as in the beginning it had foreseen and forearranged. The idea of the Bible we understand to be the mode of redemption, which God saw needful for the evil which had entered the world by sin.

The Pentateuch is the first natural division in which to see the design, as the first in order of time, both as to the events which it records, and the period of publication. In this portion of the work, we find, as we should expect to find, the *cause* of the work, the need of the work, set forth; as well as the ground plan of the work, as God's mind had sketched it.

I. First, we read of the fall of man. Man is represented as having been created in God's own image; placed in a state of peace; and provided with such occupation as his Master saw adapted to his position. All creation was placed in subjection to Him; and the only limitation was a very simple test of love and obedience: the fruit of one tree to be spared. An enemy, of whom we read, alas! much more in the later history of

man, tempts the woman when separated from the man, to doubt over the justice of the restriction; and the mind, once led to doubt the love of the One, who has made all the blessings enjoyed in all nature, passes on to believe, that the good God can lie, and to believe in opposition to His word, the bold assertion of this new friend. "Ye shall not eat of it," was God's word, "neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. . . . Ye shall not surely die," (Gen. iii. 3, 4,) was the enemy's prompt falsehood; a falsehood spoken in his own style, since the implied qualification was true. There would be the remedy for death provided by the forgiving God, so that no soul whatsoever would need to die, but by its own deliberate will. There would be One to say, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die." (John xi. 26.) And yet, should the bodily death "surely" pass upon all—and yet, should the death eternal "surely" pass upon all rejecting the free remedy provided by God's love. The bribe is, also, in Satan's true style. Eve had already the knowledge of all "good;" everything pronounced "very good," as creation closed;

and the good God, filling His creatures' hearts with good, as well as storing up good sights and good sounds for "the hearing ear, and the seeing eye," (Prov. xx. 12,) which He had made for them. All, that Satan offered Eve, was the added knowledge of "evil;" (Gen. iii. 5;) a strange temptation, one would think, for which to forfeit the favour of God, and the possession of Eden! Hence, according to the later and explanatory portion of God's Word, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) The *fact* is only too well known to us; and, whilst its reality is confirmed to us from its becoming the basis of all subsequent revelation, the entire possession which this birth-sin has of every heart, and the close manner in which most of us sin "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," (ver. 14,) are proofs, which our own breasts make us fully comprehend. The first mark of sin we find constantly to be contagion. The man fell instantly that the woman fell; and, as soon as this leprosy finds entrance into a house, the whole house be-

comes unclean; our own loved ones are the nearest to danger, not from the consequences of our sins alone *in the body*, but from the transmission of the subtle poison into the soul. And our temptation is usually the same as Eve's. The whisper comes, whether the restriction is fair? Whether we may not err just this one time? Whether the thing is so very wrong, as God says? Whether the evil, which He forbids, could indeed do as much harm to us and to others, as His command infers? We are safe in our peace and our obedience; but we would just taste of evil, curious to know, whether that which "is pleasant to the eyes," (Gen. iii. 6,) can be so very dangerous.

The immediate consequences of the fact, as fulfilling God's prophecy and sentence, follow upon the narrative of the fall. Eve and Adam might have supposed, that the sentence of death would have been immediate; and hence, perhaps, the shrinking away from God's voice in the garden; and, when the sentence was deferred, they might have hoped, that some lingering decay would preface death in every case—the

way in which their children in our day lose their souls by waiting for some period of preparation, which never comes. The first death, however, was a sudden death,—a death of violence; a death to make the stricken parents fully perceive Satan's falsehood, and to make them tremble as they saw, that there might be death with hope, and life with despair. And this death was but death's first morsel. Adam, during his prolonged life, embracing half the time between creation and the flood, would see ripening the seeds of that universal corruption, which should fill the jaws of death with the harvest of a whole world condemned. One man, Methuselah, who had spoken with Adam over the scenes of Eden, was gathered to his rest in the very year, in which his grandson Noah was preparing to enter the ark, whence the Lord should "shut" *out* a whole race of sinners. (Gen. vii. 16.)

And this history of the immediate consequences of the fall does not shew us death satisfied with this feast of life. Noah stands in Adam's place, the first man to open a new world, only to fall as Adam fell; and, if it were a pain

to Adam to look upon Cain's untamed passion, Ham's would be a worse inheritance of sin to meet a father's eye, and to grieve a father's heart.

II. And, now, the writer of the Pentateuch sketches out the whole plan, to which this one event of the fall has given rise. God's creatures have admitted the enemy to power over them—to a place in their hearts; and, while sentence is passed upon the guilt, there is an intimation, even in that moment of seemingly unmitigated justice, that there should be future deliverance from this self-made yoke: the woman's seed was in some way to offer the needful help. That this is not misconception, we know by the later reference of the completing work: "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman," (Gal. iv. 4,) "made in the likeness of men." (Phil. ii. 7.) And that this was not a premature expression of the divine mercy; not a sudden emotion of the Divine mind, arising from the sight of the sinner's distress; we know from the mention of yet an earlier period for the design of deliverance,—

"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8,) "foreordained before the foundation of the world." 1 Pet. i. 20.

The first promise is naturally vague; but the word is spoken, and revelation begins to concentrate upon one line, the genealogy of which is carefully preserved, and in connexion with which many detached little histories, and a few lives belonging to them, are preserved; whilst other pedigrees are allowed to sink into forgetfulness. One man is fixed upon, and called out of his own country, that he may be the ancestor of a distinct line of people; whilst it is intimated to him, that this is done, that all the nations of the earth may be blessed in his seed. The call is so deliberate, so clearly implying an arranged design, that the man is called and sent into the country of which he is to take possession, four hundred years before his descendants shall be gathered together as a people; and all his share of the promised land is his grave. He has many children; and they are all carefully separated from the one son, who comes to him by promise and by miracle, and in whose one person centres the foretold blessing to

all the nations of the earth. And that there may be definite connexion between this son of prophecy and the purpose, on account of which he is prophesied to be, a wonderful exercise of faith is demanded from the father; that he shall offer up, as a sacrifice to God, the life of this son, on whose life alone depends the fulfilment of promises to all the nations of the earth. For three days he considers him as dead, as they go "both of them together," to the place of sacrifice; and the son is only saved by God's order to spare, as He had given the order to slay. There is evident design in so marked a command; and we learn afterwards, that Abraham himself knew it; that he saw the day of his distant seed, "and was glad;" (John viii. 56;) that he accounted "that God was able to raise (his child) up even from the dead," and that he received him from the dead "in a figure." Heb xi. 19.)

The people thus selected, thus made, we then find kept together by miracle, as miracle had called them into being. They had been formed as a distinct people in Egypt; they are brought out thence by a series of signs and wonders,

which have left their traces yet in the names of the land of their captivity, and which struck dismay beforehand into the guilty nations occupying the land of promise, which they were now to possess. Previous to the possession, however, they shewed so strong a spirit of rebellion, that they were stopped on the very threshold of their inheritance, and compelled to wander about in the wilderness, till not one of the adult rebels remained to see the conquest of their land achieved by the little children, whom they had faithlessly murmured that God intended to deliver up into the enemies' hand. And, whilst God was thus chastening and preparing this people for His work, their support was a daily miracle: "Man did eat angels' food:" they had a purpose to discharge; and were maintained by their God and leader, until they were ready for their intended duty.

This work of Moses has, however, yet more fully to display the design which it opened. When the people at last entered upon their land, there was a law prepared for them by God Himself, and given to them in the most minute details, through

Moses, as the immediate subject of inspiration. The minuteness of these details can only be felt by reading the books of Exodus and Leviticus. That the great God of heaven and earth should shew to Moses the *pattern* of His tabernacle; that He should direct the exact model for its furniture; that the very mixing of the incense to be used, and the very ornaments to be worn by His priesthood upon their robes, should be matter of inspiration, would imply, that these things were in some manner connected with that which was of deep importance in the eye of the Allwise and the Eternal. They are more than indications of that perfect nature, which not only filled the expanse with innumerable worlds, but which crowded all nature with life, and which fashioned and measured in its power the smallest muscle, which guides the ciliæ of the smallest animalcule, and which determined the place, and the use and the guiding law of the smallest atom of His universe. This is rather the intensity of moral government, which said afterwards, that the final judgment should embrace every idle word spoken during the whole period of the world's being. The God-

given law is minute to its smallest particular; whilst the one pervading lesson is, that without "shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) Whether the offence were small, or great; even were it accidental; the sacrifice must be. And this lesson is laid down from the beginning. Animal food was not allowed to man until after the flood, with the seeming reason, that we might understand Abel, "a keeper of sheep," (Gen. iv. 2,) only for the purpose of sacrifice; and that "God had respect unto Abel, and to his offering;" (ver. 4;) that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" (Heb. xi. 4;) because Abel offered the sacrifice that he was *told* to offer, and Cain, that which he (Cain) thought best. The whole body of the law is one succession of sacrifice; and its language—"the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an *atonement* for your souls: for it is the *blood* that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. xvii. 11.) We are told later in THE BOOK, "that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb. x. 4.)

This was but a preparation of the human mind for the way, in which sins could be taken away.

And, that these ordinances may be known to refer to others than the people to whom they were given, it is impressed upon them, that they were not chosen for any merit of theirs, for they were a stiff-necked and rebellious people; and the threatenings and promises, with which the second giving of the law were connected, were such as to support the teaching of sacrifice—that there was a purpose in view beyond the mere guidance of this one people; that they had destinies to fulfil, which should carry them beyond the boundaries of their own peculiar history. We shall see, in their later history, the fulfilment of one of the most awful of the impending judgments, of which Moses spoke some six hundred years before; and yet the same dreadful fact was to mark again the period of a yet more dreadful time, when they should have fulfilled prophecy in rejecting their own Christ. (Deut. xxviii. 57; 2 Kings vi. 29.)

III. This earliest portion of God's work had

early intimations of the future Deliverer promised at the fall; but still vague, because early. Such was the promise to Abraham, which would seem general to those who did not receive it, as he did, in simple faith, and with a clearer light. And such was Balaam's fore-view of the time, when he should "behold Him, but not nigh," (Num. xxiv. 17,) see Him, as we are told, that "every eye shall" one day "see Him, and they also that pierced Him." (Rev. i. 7.) Balaam was compelled to prophecy, that "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel;" (Num. xxiv. 17;) although his personal benefit should be no more than that of Caiaphas, when he said, "that one man should die for the people." (John xi. 50.) Before, however, Moses closed his mission, finished that portion of God's work which was given to *him* to do, a more direct word was spoken. Moses reminded the people, that they had feared the unveiled Godhead and prayed for a mediator; and he adds—"The Lord said unto me, they have well spoken that which they have spoken. I *will* raise them up a Prophet from among their

brethren, like unto thee; and I will put My words in his mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass," (Deut. xviii. 17, 18,)—solemn declaration!—"that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." (ver. 19.) And thus Moses says definitely—"The Lord thy God *will* raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken." (ver. 15.) And to this promise the preachers of the fulfilled word confidently appeal: Peter, with a direct reference to the result of not hearing that prophet like unto Moses; and Stephen, with faith to see that Greater One, and to commend his parting spirit to His care. (Acts iii. 23; ch. vii. 35, 56, 59.) And the revealed prophet like unto Moses seems to have chosen His expressions frequently, with reference to this prophecy: "As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." (John viii. 28.) "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him." (ver. 26.) "I speak that which I have seen with my Father."

(v. 38.) "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father, which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say . . . whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." (ch. xii. 49, 50.) Powerful expressions! displaying the eternity of the conceptions, which then found words! God's "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began," (Eph. iii. 11,) when He had His glory with the Father "before the world was." (John xvii. 5.)

And these books of Moses are, as we have said, merely a part of God's plan, the development of which we shall gradually trace. This is merely the foundation, and we proceed to the superstructure. The extent of the foundation, however, gives some idea of the building; as the few columns of Persepolis convey to us the idea of an enormous temple; as the relics of Nineveh in our museum gives us an impression of the "great city of three days' journey;" (Jonah iii. 3;) as the fossil fragment astounds us with the size of the reptiles who inhabited the wastes of the earlier world. These books and their

details are of course, connected with all the future history of the Jews. It is, in fact, their history. Commencing with the common origin of all people, it branches off to their peculiar constitution, and opens up all their subsequent records. There is no part of the subsequent history of the people, which does not refer back to its origin,—to the rock whence it was hewn; (Isa. li. 1;) the scheme, the law, laid down by Moses, continue throughout all their generations; and that it does not now obtain among them, is only because they have fulfilled their own prophecies, and have made themselves outcasts from their temple and their land. They may not return "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," by whom Jerusalem is "trodden down." (Lu. xxi. 20.)

2. And thus the Pentateuch is interwoven with all history; with the history of all nations that have ever been, and that shall ever be. The whole history of the Jews is but *a* period in the scheme, of which they were only made a people, that they might form a part. The periods thus embraced may seem large; but all size is com-

parative; and they are lost as we contemplate the whole, with which they are connected. They were four hundred years in forming; and they had an existence from Moses, till the temple, which saw its Lord rejected, was laid in ruins, of some fifteen hundred years; but these times are exceeded by those, in which God has said, "Ye are not My people." (Hos. i. 10.) They were four hundred years in forming; and it was scarcely a longer time before ten of the twelve tribes broke away from God's allegiance; and after a rapid decline of two hundred and fifty years, warned and chastened, but warned and chastened in vain, Israel passed away; and two thousand five hundred years have passed over her in her rejected state, during the larger portion of which it was a doubt whether any trace of her could yet be found. And the younger branch, Judah, wherein the Lord God was pleased to set up His name; to which the eyes of the whole world still look with longing eyes for the earlier marks of completed salvation for the entire body of God's creatures; the exile of Judah has already surpassed in its extent the duration of her being as a people. And yet,

this exile is manifestly for a time. Judah was never more a peculiar people, never more distinctly separate from every other people, under her judges, and her kings, than at this very moment. What shall be the length of her exile? What are the ages comprised in the slowly maturing counsels of the Deity? We can only know when we look back, as we now look forward. Seeing the scheme *as a whole*, of which Judaism is only a part, larger details have need to be embraced. There was a promise to Eve; but four thousand years were to pass ere it was fulfilled. The fulfilment came in its arranged time; and for nearly two thousand years more, the kingdom of the Son of man has been in progress; and we have yet no definite time, no definite signs of a time, when the kingdom shall commence in the future world. Many human beings have assumed the prophet, and have told us when the reign of the Christ should positively be; but time has rolled its waves over their landmark, and mocked their presumption. We do not yet know when the kingdom shall begin, and time shall merge into its duration.

The later prophet, who marked the time when the Jewish state should draw on its own ruin—when Messiah the Prince should be cut off, but not for Himself; when the people of the prince that should come should "destroy the city and the sanctuary;" (Dan. ix. 26;) when the "sacrifice and the oblation" (ver. 27) should cease,—foresaw the period, when the Son of man should come with the clouds of heaven—"and there should be given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (ch. vii. 13.) There has been, also, another one under the second great division of God's one design, to whom the secrets of the future have been laid open; and his view of the kingdom at once embraces this foundation which Moses laid, and displays its intimate connexion with the whole design, as it is lost amidst eternity.

In his vision, the servants of God are sealed —according to what geographical division? according to what political arrangement? according

to the names of "the tribes of the children of Israel," (Rev. vii. 4,)—even as Moses parcelled out to them the promised land. There is a song sung in the courts of heaven by them "who had gotten the victory over the beast," standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God;" (ch. xv. 2;) and the song of the redeemed is "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." (ver. 3.) The Lamb, and he who first spoke of Him; the Lamb, and he who appeared with Him in glory, even whilst the Lamb of God was yet on earth; this is a fit conjunction to convey the idea of an eternal plan, of which Moses was the first instrument.

And so, the Lamb, the lamb of Abel, and of the law, the lamb of atonement, the Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world, stands as the great object of enjoyment and praise in the new Jerusalem. "The Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of it. . . . The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. . . . The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." (Rev. xxi. 22; xxii. 3.) The Gospel is not simply the fulfilment of the Law. In fulfilling

the Law, the Gospel shews, that both law and gospel have reference to a previously designed atonement, of which the results lie in eternity. They display the need of the atonement; but they display, also, its certainty and its perfection.

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY.

A THOUSAND YEARS—PLAN PROCEEDING—LAND OF PROMISE, POSSESSED—BY LOT—MORE CONCENTRATION—TWO CLASSES—HOPEFUL CLASS CHASTENED—CAPTIVITY — INTERWEAVINGS OF HISTORY AND PROPHECY — EPISODES — TRACES OF THE ONE—FOREVIEWS OF WHOLE—THE INFINITE SELF-BOUND.

THE great plan is laid; and its skeleton not only formed in detail, but its cause made known and its object—so full a sketch given, that, as the design is gradually developed, man may say —This hath God done; "Verily, He is a God that judgeth in the earth." (Ps. lviii. 11.)

Our present division comprises the history of the chosen people from the time of Moses to the

close of the old covenant—to the termination of prophecy—a space of some thousand years. What a range for our view! But we are thus compressing the subject, that we may form some general idea of its unity. And ever, as our human minds are startled at the times and spaces which we have to survey, let us feel that these are atoms to the designing Mind.

We will trace the history to see the plan's advancement; the intermixture of this with other portions of the plan; and notices of the one object, the foretold Redeemer.

I. We find the people put into possession of their land—the land which God had promised to them in Abraham—which Abraham was called up out of his country to possess, although his possession should but be his grave, and even that, matter of purchase. The very mode of possession reminds us Whose the promise is, and by Whom alone it can be fulfilled. The whole land was already occupied by the heathen nations, in all the strength of their numbers and of their fenced cities; the border was not passed; when a portion of the people fancied the land, in which

they then were, and asked of Moses to make that their portion of the inheritance. Moses acceded to the request, upon the condition, that the askers should leave their wives and children there, and pass on, armed, to fight with their brethren, until their brethren, also, should be settled. There is no doubt amongst them as to the result. The land was still the same land, as when the spies brought back an evil report of it,—the people as strong,—the cities as great, and as well walled; "the children of Anak there . . . men of a great stature." (Num. xiii. 28, 32.) But Moses speaks surely of the future division; and Gad, Reuben, and Mannasseh, are satisfied that the termination of the war offers but a certain definite postponement to the full enjoyment of this land of their wishes. And now, when Jordan is passed, before the whole of Canaan is fully occupied, it is "by lot" (Jos. xiii. 6) that the division is made: He, who feedeth the young ravens, that call upon Him; He, from whom the lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat; He, by whom the hairs of every head are numbered; He, to whom each

living soul is sent for daily bread; would not leave the settling of His people a matter of uncertainty. He, who had given to Israel, and to Moses, anticipations of the future histories of the tribes, was merely carrying out His purposes in this allotment. Would that each nation remembered itself under the designing providence of the great God! Would that each soul felt itself comprised within the government, which eternity sent forth for the ages of which time shall be composed!

The people settled in their land, revelation began again to narrow the line, through which the promises were to be realized. The seed was to spring from the woman, not the man: of the sons of Noah, Shem was the chosen one; of his descendants, Abraham: of Abraham's sons, Isaac was alone heir of the promises; and when Esau's birthright passed on to the younger son, Jacob, Judah became the son through whom the inheritance should pass. And now the limitation passes to one of this royal line, and centres in David—a man, with his full share of weakness and sin—a man, no more *fit* to be chosen as the

ancestor of the Great Redeemer, than was His people to be so chosen—a man, with much purpose of heart to seek God,—one described by God Himself, as a man after His own heart,—and yet constantly beset by his birthdom of sin, and entangled in its sorrows. The word comes to him,—"When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee; and I will establish His kingdom." (2 Sam. vii. 12.) The work is going on, and its author makes His arrangement of the plan as He sees best for the perfecting of the work. These choosings we see to be entirely arbitrary, "according to the good pleasure of His will," whilst they impose certain laws upon future events, that they shall conform with these lines early marked down.

The history of the people passes onward. A fresh limitation occurs among David's sons; an event, all the more marked, because, under the rule of this selected son, a breach occurs amongst God's people, helping to confirm to us one general lesson, which the whole history of the world seems to convey. Ten of the tribes cast off their

allegiance to God; and, after a brief period of endurance and trial, they are cast off by God. This seems the universal order of God's government—the original word, if ye disobey, "Ye shall surely die." "Noah walked with God;" (Gen. vi. 9;) and "built an ark to the saving of his house:" the flood swept away the rest of corrupted humanity. Shem and Japheth followed in their father's steps, and the earth is yet occupied by them; whilst fire and sword swept away Canaan. (Gen ix. 27.) And now Israel ceases to be, because Israel ceases to own God as a ruler. They were not even permitted to remain to see the fulfilment of the promises which they had cast off. Seven hundred years before "the fulness of the appointed time," when the seed of the woman should be, they passed away as captives into a foreign land; and, although prophecy seems to imply their final restoration with the sister kingdom of Judah,—and, although the glimpses, which recent days have given us of their continued existence in possession still of their old law, confirm this hope—we know not how many ages have yet to be added to the twenty-

five centuries, which have already seen their exile. We know that every soul of them will one day "behold the man," whom Judah "slew, and hanged on a tree;" (Acts v. 30;) and may almost be satisfied to have lost their birthright, when the possessed birthright had no better result than a denied and crucified Christ; but we hope that they have an earlier and happier day, when they may join their converted oppressors in owning "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." (Matt. i. 1.)

We see still the manner of God's universal Providence, in the chastening which rests upon the younger and chosen branch, Judah. Israel had no sooner been removed from her place, and Samaria occupied by all varieties of idolatry, than Judah so enlarged her idolatries, that it became necessary to cleanse her people, the people of the Christ, from this special sin. A term of captivity was, therefore, allotted to her of seventy years; whilst the people were instructed to preserve their records, and to arrange for that sure return, which awaited them, when the period was past. This captivity, like Moses' arrangements of a portion

of the promised inheritance, or like Joseph's instruction for the burial of his bones, is one of the surest evidences of a working design, such as none but the Almighty One could conceive or mature. "Where is now your God?" might the heathen have well asked. His city is in ruins; His people are in a distant captivity; wastes, rivers, and perils of all kinds lie between the captives and their lands; they are the slaves of powerful kings; and enemies hold their fields in possession. And, yet, we know that all this was matter of prophecy, and thus of arrangement. The manner of the captivity; by whom it should be; with whom it should end; the number of its years; its cause, and its purpose; these were all foretold; and from that land of seemingly hopeless captivity arose some of the brightest prophecies for the completion of prophecy. Some of those younger captives, should yet, as aged men, weep for joy, as they beheld the temple of their Chastening and Restoring God rise from its ruins; by that river of Chebar should the ever-present God give visions of future days, over which 2400 years have rolled, have

not seen them closed; such witness should be there borne before kings and great men, that the king should leave his throne to acknowledge that there was no such God as the God of his captive slave; and the very time, when the promise to Eve should have its accomplishment, was revealed to the prayers and supplications of captive Judah. (Dan. ix. 3.) It is deeply instructive, also, to perceive, that this captivity answered its purpose. There had been most fearful evidence during the whole previous history of the people, that they had, indeed, not been chosen for their own righteousness. The very occupation of their inheritance began in disobedience. The heathen were not destroyed, as the order came; and they suffered the result of all hesitating obedience, of all imperfect faith, in the closeness with which idolatry clung to them up to the very period of the captivity. Formed by miracle, maintained by miracle, with a constant succession of prophets authorized by miracle, with a law, asserting and preserving its power and meaning, only by miraculous communion with God; we can only understand the idolatry of Judah, as we under-

stand that of Rome, by the fact: one would call it impossible, but that it is. No threatenings, awful as the language of prophecy is, even surpassing the foretold curse of Moses; no chastenings, through all the varying period of the judges, through even the deep crimes of Omri's race; availed to check idolatry; but, when by the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept, as they remembered Zion, (Ps. cxxxvii. 1,) they began to understand and to value lost blessings; and they returned from the land of the heathen, never to know again this old sin, which seemed almost a part of themselves. And we, the sharers of their nature, can well conceive how this might be; we, from whom God is so often compelled to take away His blessings, that we may awaken to their value. The emigrant, who cared little for the Sabbath bell at home, longs for its sound in the forest, and will travel scores of miles to be present at one opportunity of worship, which he neglected when the house of God stood beside him. The very worst gold-digger, an apostate, or an outcast, must have his Sabbath; although the very word was a mockery to him in a Chris-

tian land. May God save us from this mode of teaching, by inclining our hearts to serve Him for love's sake! Over how many exiles of Judah would those seventy years sweep, who would never see Jerusalem again! And Israel was, also, exiled; and has never returned!

II. This period of the captivity is itself an example of the manner, in which all the history of God's people is interwoven with the earlier and the later portions of God's plan. Moses foreknew it; Joshua foreknew it; Solomon foreknew it; whilst the prophecies, which came from the land of banishment, were not only the maturing prophecies of the earlier covenant, but reach away into the distant times of the Messiah's everlasting kingdom.

Throughout the whole of this history, also, whilst there is an evident continuation of previously arranged details, all is evidently preparatory to something, which is yet to be. Ezra and Nehemiah, who were superintendents of the returning people, were strict observers of the law; were very careful to teach the people, that they could only remain God's people, as they carried out His instructions. Intermarriage with idola-

tors was earnestly watched, as affecting the distinct character of the people, and as risking the old cause of offence; whilst the Sabbath and the Sacrifice were maintained, as the peculiar and immediate bonds of union between God and Judah.

There is, again, a constant reference *to prophets*. The God, who governed the world, and who made this nation the guardians of His oracles, was not satisfied with instructions for the present, but was offering perpetual glimpses of the future,—sure mark of a design in that future. And the writings thus accumulated, during these thousand years, form so many witnesses of the facts, amongst which they arose. The prophecies were addressed to certain kings, of whose lives we read; and we are thus able to judge whether there is a harmony between the times and the prophecy; whether the historian and the prophet belong evidently to the same period. And, thus, the kings themselves were authors, and we have their works. David composed; and Solomon composed; the one, with the largest experience of human wisdom, and the other, with the most intimate acquaintance with God's go-

vernment; the one, speaking of God as He is, the other, speaking of God as He shews Himself to be. And both of these speak of an imperfect world. Solomon, the man of large understanding, describes it as one scene of vanity; with nothing of any kind whatsoever, upon which the mind of man may rest; whilst the mind of David penetrates the darkness of future ages, and speaks of events, previous to which a thousand years must pass away. These are parts of a plan: God's creatures are employed, each in his way, in preparing that, which is yet to be. A thousand years roll by, as we thus watch the stream of time; and, whilst we see the design going on, we see that it is incomplete: a thousand years pass, and there is no change in the system of sacrifice, with which they began: a thousand years are gone; and there is still "not a just man upon earth, that sinneth not." There has been, as yet, none to help—no atonement.

And we might here notice those episodes in the history, which seem to be preserved, we might imagine, without reason. Thus, in the earlier history, we might have noticed the introduction

of Melchisedec, as one, of whom we know no more than Moses tells us; coming abruptly upon us "without descent;" (Heb. vii. 3;) without that genealogy which seems attached to other names: we see no reason why this man is thus named. And, yet, there would seem to have been a reason. David takes him up some thousand years later; and, in a passage, which the Jews understood to refer to their Christ, and to which the Christ afterwards referred them, as shewing that the Christ was more than a man like themselves, David speaks of the Christ as "a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." (Ps. cx. 4.) And then, when another thousand years are past, the shadow and the prophet are both referred to, as foreshewing the "Great High Priest," (Heb iv. 14; v. 6, 10,) who should offer the one atonement for His people. So, fulfilled history takes up, seemingly, unimportant men,—Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah,"—to tell us that, with all their imperfections as "men of like passions with ourselves," they were evidences of a working faith, as much as David, and Samuel, and the prophets, (Heb. xi. 32,)—

part of "a great cloud of witnesses" to encourage us, as we "run with patience the race that is set before us." (ch. xii. 1.) So, one short book stands seemingly cut off from other narratives; but we find it to contain the history of one included in the genealogy of the promised seed of the woman; in the immediate line of David: and another such detached work records the origin of a marked festival amongst the chosen people of Christ. A God-governed, and a God-supported people traces back all its customs to some marked act of their Heavenly King; and every individual decree of His government reminds us, that He has chosen this people, for a purpose, as a part of a design.

III. And this portion of the design keeps before us, as we have said, the traces of the promise; and in that manner in which God constantly and markedly shews, that He alone can be His own safe interpreter. The object of prophecy is not only to prepare His creatures for that which futurity shall gradually bring on, but to display His own fore-knowledge and thus His fore-ordainment. "I will set up thy seed after

thee, and I will establish His kingdom," is the word to David. "He shall build an house for My name; and I will stablish the throne of His kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and He shall be My Son. If He commit iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men; but My mercy shall not depart away from Him, as I took it from Saul . . . thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever." (2 Sam. vii. 12—16.) There is a manifest reference to Solomon *first*, as in the promise to Abraham there was *first* to Isaac—as in the prophets we have many a *first* fulfilment—as in the foreshadowings of the day of judgment, there are *first* allusions to the day of judgment on Jerusalem: these are "unspeakable" (2 Cor. xii. 4) things, until the future shall make them clear. The designing and working mind cannot separate the figure from the reality; but the finite being is confused by the mixture of the present and the future; or of the two futures, separated by distances of time, which his mind cannot yet

measure. David, in his prophetic character, takes up this promise to him and has visions of its full meaning. "Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant; thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." (Ps. lxxxix. 2—4.) "Then Thou spakest in visions to Thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him." (ver. 19, 26.) "He shall cry unto Me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. And I will make Him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." (ver. 26, 27.) "Once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." (ver. 35, 36.) And, again, "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, He will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." (ch. cxxxii. 11.) Upon these pas-

sages the Jews rested their assurance, that their Christ should abide for ever; (John xii. 34;) although they received Him not when He came: "the Stem of Jesse," (Isa. xi. 1,) and "the Root of Jesse," (ver. 10,) of Isaiah; "the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David," (Jer. xxxiii. 15,) of Jeremiah; the "Fountain for sin and for uncleanness opened to the house of David," (Zec. xiii. 1,) of Zechariah; the "David a prince," (Eze. xxxiv. 24,) "David My servant," (ch. xxxvii. 24,) of Ezekiel; these were the hope of Israel, until they blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should be converted and saved. And to these promises, those of God's people who did own their Messiah, appealed, preaching Jesus to their fellow Jews out of their own law, shewing that He was the very One, to whose hope they had been clinging for ages. Thus, Paul at Antioch—"He raised up unto them David to be their king; of this man's seed hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." (Acts xiii. 22, 23.) And this promise, to which Paul refers as to one well known to those whom he

addressed, Peter gives more distinctly, when the descent of the Holy Ghost had marked God's completed work: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up *Christ* to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ." (ch. ii. 29—31.) And Paul to the Hebrews expressly uses as prophecy that portion of the promise which we should have been disposed to limit to Solomon—"God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son"—"unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And, again, He saith, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?" (Heb. i. 2, 5.) These are all striking facts, carrying out the original idea, which God had raised, that there was a *necessity* for these things. It is a striking fact, that the Almighty should tie Himself down to certain definite modes of pro-

ceeding, to certain distinct lines of ancestry, for the One, who should be the foretold seed of the woman. "Thus it must be," was the promised One's own word, with reference to the fulfilment of prophecy. Prophets could not have been speaking for ages, that their words should return to them void. "He, with whom a thousand years are but as yesterday, when it is past," could not have been contemplating One Being for successive ages, unless the One Being were to accomplish some great design. David does not become a prophetic word, so identified with his seed who should sit upon his throne, that one can hardly separate them in prophecy, until we see that David speaks of "David" as a future and a greater than David.

As the Son of Abraham, we trace up the seed of the woman to the period of David; and then, as the Son of David, we continue the traces of the same One, till His record begins as "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." (Matt. i. 1.)

CHAPTER IV.

POETRY.

DIVISIONS ARBITRARY, AS IN OTHER WORKS—POETRY, BOTH HISTORY AND PROPHECY—RAPID ADVANCEMENT OF PURPOSE—DESIGN NARROWED TO ONE—A SUFFERING ONE—YET A GREAT ONE—PROPHETIC LONGINGS—WRITINGS, MINDS OF HISTORY—SHADOWS OF THE COMING FOOTSTEPS—STILL SO DISTANT—SEEN ATONEMENT—CONTRAST OF DIGNITY AND WORK.

We pass on to another division, which we assume as the poetry of the Bible. All such divisions must be arbitrary. In endeavouring to form our conceptions of creation, systems of different kinds have been devised to convey to us the plan of the animal or of the vegetable kingdom; and each has been divided and sub-divided in such way, that the finite mind of man may take in the universe of his God piecemeal; and thus be able by degrees to raise his mind to the nature of Him, by whom the whole, of which the creature can by labour acquire the knowledge of a part, was at once willed into existence. All these human plans, however, carry their own mark of

imperfection. They are purely arbitrary; and wheresoever the line of genus, or of species, may be drawn, other genera and other species approach so closely, that the line might just as well have been drawn anywhere else. There are no separations in the creation of God. As He made of one blood all the nations of the earth, and as He has designed them for one common home, one order embraces all animate and inanimate forms, so that one form glides imperceptibly into its neighbour form, till we find, that, through steps so gradual that the human eye cannot follow them, we are led on to distances of form so great, that human minds have to cultivate learning and science before they can trace a common point of union. Thus is man himself allied to the quadruped, the bird, the fish, the reptile; and, whenever he is disposed to exalt himself against his Maker, any book of natural history may remind him, that God alone has made him to differ; that God alone gave him the mind and the soul; that God alone created him in His own image. And let man only forget his God and put away the light provided for his better part, and he has

soon to learn, how truly it was grace alone which made him better than the beasts around him, as he sees himself degraded by brutish passions to a lower level than any beast of the field.

To understand the heavens, also, the astronomer maps them over with imagined figures, within which the various stars are assumed to be grouped; and through which the track of the most wandering comet may be watched and recorded; but they offer only a faint view of even the visible heavens; and, as science assists with higher powers, the sight of all that we can see only shews us our own imperfection and teaches what humble learners we are in the creations of the Infinite and the Eternal.

Our poetic division, as a part of the great whole, cannot be distinctly separated from its other parts. We take the book of Job as a poetic work; but it is the history of Job, and the more valuable, as a memorial of the habits of that early period. Thus the book of Psalms is specially poetic; but, it is also, special prophecy; opening out to us explanations of the original cause for the creation of sacrifice and preparing

us for nearer and more clear revelations of completed sacrifice. Still, some division is needful; and this seems to comprise a sufficient portion of the Bible for convenience. The risen Redeemer alludes to such an arbitrary division of the Scriptures by His people, when He says, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." (Luke xxiv. 44.) The division was into the Law, the Prophets, and the Sacred Writings; of the latter of which, "the Psalms" was the first book, and gave the name sometimes to the division. In this portion of our subject we may again see the great plan's advancement, its intermixture with the others, and the traces of the one subject of the Book, the Seed of the woman.

I. There is a rapid advancement of the great purpose; a large development of the manner, in which the deliverance promised to Eve should take effect. This portion is, of course, of equal time with those which have preceded. We have passed by the times wherein the writers lived; and their writings convey to us the impressions

upon their minds, with reference to the work which God gave them to do. Thus, we are told of Moses, that he wrote of Christ; (John v. 46;) that he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt;" (Heb. xi. 26;) and, on a reference to his writings, we find the words of Balaam, the promises to Abraham, the foretold prophet like unto himself. And, here, if we would know how far the history of our last division had brighter intimations of the coming Christ, we turn to the writings of the men to find such evidence of advancing light, as to startle the human mind. As yet, although the world has so much aged; as yet, there has been only a dim assurance, that deliverance from the enemy's work shall be: there is a general intimation, that the deliverance shall be by blood, the great idea of sacrifice being constantly maintained; and this deliverance appears to be narrowed *to a person*. The woman's seed might have been more than one; the seed of Isaac was to multiply as the sand upon the sea shore; and, although fulfilled prophecy would read the word, "He saith not, and to seeds, as of

many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ," (Gal. iii. 16,) unfulfilled prophecy would have upon it its needful cloud; but Moses closed his share of the work, by speaking of "*a* prophet like unto" (Deut. xviii. 15) himself; and to David, the promise becomes single in *his* seed, —"He shall be my son." (2 Sam. vii. 12.)

And now, as we see how far God gave more full knowledge of the coming One, we find new elements of the plan developed, which throw much light upon the appointed sacrifices of the law: we find notices of a *suffering* Redeemer. God had, indeed, said of the woman's seed, when addressing the condemned enemy, "Thou shalt bruise His heel;" (Gen. iii. 15;) but the obscurity of four thousand years yet rested upon the expression. Abraham had, indeed, been sent to Moriah for three days, to mourn his son as dead; and, on the third day, to receive him from the dead in a figure; but his contemporaries might not have known the fact; and Abraham might not have been commissioned to declare the gospel, which was thus "preached before unto him." (Gal. iii. 8.) Prophecy begins now to clothe the an-

nounced deliverer with attributes of greatness. It was a sceptre that Balaam foresaw to rise out of Israel; (Num. xxiv. 17;) and the solemn caution to those, who should refuse to hear "the prophet like unto" Moses, prepares us to understand, that "the government shall be upon His shoulder;" (Isa. ix. 6;) but David has greater things than these to see of the heir of his name, and of his kingdom. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Ps. cx. 1.) Nay, yet more strong and more striking expressions are claimed under the teaching of the Spirit, as fore-views which David had of Him, whom the Jews were satisfied to call his Son. (Matt. xxii. 42, 5.) "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre." (Ps. xlv. 6.) And, "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." (Ps. cii. 25; Heb. i. 8, 10.) And, it is satisfactory in the days of fulfilment, to find this great work of creation claimed for the coming One, who had then been, by the one of His disciples, to whom the greatest range of revela-

tion seems to have been granted: "All things were made by Him; and without Him, was not anything made, that was made." (John i. 3.) What were the thousand years between David and John to Him, who put the same word into their mouths!

But the great advancement of the scheme is in that "mystery of godliness," that it behoved this great Being of all prophecy to suffer. There are intimations of suffering, and of great suffering, veiled under the obscurity of prophecy, but still sufficient to prepare the mind for the suffering that would be. "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. . . . All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, — He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him; let Him deliver him, seeing He delighted in him." (Ps. xxii. 6—8.) "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax . . . My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For . . . the

assembly of the wicked hath enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments amongst them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (ver. 14—18.) We are told, that "Abraham was glad" (John viii. 56) as he foresaw the day of his promised seed; and the mind cannot but speculate, whether he was permitted to see the manner in which the nations of the earth were to be blessed in his seed. The demanded sacrifice on Mount Moriah, and Paul's allusion to it, would seem to imply a knowledge of the mode of redemption; but the particularity of detail, by which the full foreknowledge of Calvary is confirmed, seems reserved for later prophecy. The prophet's would seem a strange office! Honoured with revelation; honoured as God's servant; glad to see their Master's work; glad to know of assured redemption; and, yet, only seeing such portions as pleased God, and uncertain of the times, when the very things should be of which they spake, It was a solemn thing for David, himself a grievous sinner, to have this light upon the future, given through

him, upon what sin should bring upon the woman's seed; and there were yet other dim tracings of the treachery of a private friend, and of mockery in an hour of pain. (Ps. xli. 9.) "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Ps. lxix. 21.) There would be comfort to him in that anticipated view of the conquered grave, to which Peter refers, when he "spake before of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption;" (Acts ii. 31; Ps. xvi. 10;) but, however it might comfort the man after God's own heart, that redemption should be thus achieved, the child of Adam would think of his own share in the need, which brought Christ to the cross and to the grave; to the experience of corruption and suffering. The saved saint may rejoice in his received mercy; but he cannot forget the sin, which made the mercy needful. Even as David saw the tomb void from the risen Christ, he would remember that Uriah made that dwelling-place for the Christ.

There appears, also, to have been a longing

upon the prophetic mind for some share in the revealed deliverance; since we read, that the prophets "searched diligently . . . what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Pet. i. 10, 11.) There were glimpses of the glorious results of this long arranged and gradually maturing scheme of perfect wisdom, which awakened a desire for some personal share in the glory; and, however this may have been then denied to the workers in that department of God's work, as to many other labourers in different parts of the Lord's vineyard, there may yet be a memory and a recompense, when the Lord calleth His faithful servants to enter into His glory, into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xix. 28.) There were promised thrones for the companions of His earthly life; and we read of judgment given unto certain, who sat upon thrones in the great vision of John; (Rev. xx. 4;) and we read of "white robes . . . given unto every one of them," (ch. vi. 11,) "that were slain for the word of

God, and for the testimony which they held;" (ver. 9;) and we know how often this has been the close of the prophet's labours; He, who has promised to reward every man according to his work, may well be trusted to determine both the amount and the value of his recompence.

II. This portion of the Bible is, from its very nature, intermingled with the earlier and the later portions. Job, for example, was a patriarch of early days; marked by his length of life and by the absence of all mention of the Law from Mount Sinai; and yet Job stands connected with the earliest days of the world by his practice of sacrifice (Job i. 5) as a means of atonement and sanctification; whilst he reaches into all future time by his knowledge of a living Redeemer. Considering the age in which he lived, Job is a good pattern of the amount of foreknowledge belonging to his generation: if nearly contemporary with Abraham, there would be others to see the day of his seed and to be glad. "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth," is Job's expression, "and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and, though after my skin,

worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." (Job xix. 25—27.) This is a good confession, giving a comfortable impression of a revealed knowledge of the great work which God had undertaken to do; and of its results. Job's Redeemer *lived then*, although two thousand years were to pass before He should stand upon the earth, but stand upon the earth He would in that later day; and, as his Redeemer should thus take a body amongst men, so should men with their living bodies and their living eyes see God in the better state of being. It would be needful that they should die—that dust should return to dust; and yet should that very flesh be enabled to see God. The patriarch stands midway between the fall and the atonement, and already speaks an Apostle's language—"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. xv. 22.)

As a writer, Solomon embodies those great moral facts, which God has marked as the cause

of His plan and the evidences of its progress. He speaks of the world as a marred world; of all those varied means of blessing, with which God had made it beautiful and loveable; and yet was all "vanity of vanities." He has reference to sacrifice, as in existence, in needed existence: he knew, as a strict observer of the world under all its forms, that it did not contain one sinless man: (Ecc. vii. 20:) and yet he knew the needful sacrifice useless in itself—"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xv. 8.) "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." (ch. xxi. 3.) The wise man knew sacrifice but as God had appointed it—as the preparation of the heart for that means which God had provided to put away sin. What would the wisest man think, could he return to earth, and find redemption finished, and yet men thinking that their own sacrifices could benefit them without "justice and judgment!"

The Psalms of David surpass the wisdom of his more worldly Son in the constant reference to sacrifice as merely typical and preparatory—

in thus shewing all previous time, and all that age, and all the time yet to be before the foreseen betrayal, all as merely the introductory details of some future event. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. li. 16, 17.) And to estimate this language, we must remember it the language of the man, who brought up the ark of God with sacrifices of oxen and fatlings at every six paces; (2 Sam. vi, 13;) who laid up that great store for the Temple which his Son should build—a Temple for the full maintenance of the perpetual sacrifices of the law. They were but vain sacrifices; and yet they were appointed sacrifices; even as he had heard the voice of inspiration—"Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required: then said I, Lo! I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." (Ps. xl. 6—8.) David had already seen that which it

remained for Paul more clearly to explain; "I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. Above, when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will," —the will of God, which the Son came to do—"I came down from heaven, not to do Mine Own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," (John vi. 38,)—"by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. x. 7—10,) That "volume of the book," also, sends us backward and forward throughout all time, from Moses, who first wrote in it, up to that time of John's record of the book above, which "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open" . . . until "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, prevailed to open the book." (Rev. v. 3—5.) How do those epithets, again, used in heaven, awaken the echoes of past ages! One cannot

touch a portion of the word, without having its oneness drawn into view from innumerable other contingent passages.

III. And thus we see the shadows, as it were, of the Redeemer's footsteps already marking the world, on which He is to stand at yet a very distant day, so far as human life is concerned. Thirty generations are yet to be born and die, each man of whom has his own part to perform on God's world, before the Messiah shall be; and yet the notices of Him are more definitely given. As this portion of the Bible is not historical, except in the short account of Job and his family, to see the advancement of the great scheme is to see the traces of the coming Christ; to perceive the intermixture of these writings with the past and the future, is to mark the traces of the Christ, as they gradually pass out of the darkness of earlier times and assume a more distinct character. We have now sufficient to shew us the design of the atonement—to shew *us*, who look back upon it—us, who have all the benefit of the Christ's own light upon that which had been written of Him. We can perceive,

that, thus early, with so long a period yet in prospect; whilst no one prophet of that holy order which so soon arose and maintained their position as God's servants and messengers, has yet opened his mouth; redemption had assumed its lofty tone. "Thus it must be"—"Thus it behoved Christ to suffer." The greatness of the Sacrifice, and the mode of sacrifice, were already stamped upon revelation. The future Redeemer was not one, who was to be: He already lived: He had already expressed His willingness to carry out the will of God. To do this will, He would *come*, as an act of His own will, and from some place where He had His being, when He contemplated the work which was designed for Him, and whence He could come to do it. And, the work done, there was glory to recompense the doing—or, at least, to follow its performance—the Lord had a place at His right hand (Ps. cx. 1) for the Conqueror, when He had finished His work. And yet, this greatness of the victim was strangely contrasted with the manner of that which He came to do; or, as it would seem, came to undergo. The One, by whom the heavens and

the earth were made; the One, who had a sceptre and a kingdom; could He be the same One, who would suffer by the betrayal of a friend? Could He be the subject of those mockings—"a reproach of men and despised of the people?" (Ps. xxii. 6.) Could it be of Him, that the pangs of thirst are described as aggravating death? Could He be surrounded by the wicked, and exposed in each limb helplessly to their cruel piercings? (ver. 16.) The thought seems entirely unreasonable; and yet it is distinctly foreshewn, that redemption should be of this nature—the Victim great and the suffering great. And this view certainly accords with the view which the Almighty Maker took of His sin-infected creation; and of the times which were needed to cleanse it from its stain, and to restore the children of Adam to their forfeited inheritance. As we look at either end of the great design, we have a sufficiently awful view of sin before God; in the one case, man driven from paradise; the very nature of the world changed to him; his dependence upon God changed into a fear which impels from God; false shame turning to the

consequences of an act, without caring for the act's wrongfulness; on the other hand, the One without sin hanging upon the cross, "the just dying for the unjust." And yet, the early design and the slow maturity speak almost more of the difficulty of bringing back the unholy to the favour of the Holy God. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," (Rom. viii. 22,) under the consequences of sin; and yet redemption may not be! There must yet be thousands of years before redemption shall be! There must be gradual prophecies, and ages of types,—slow steps of revelation! And then, when the time is, there is no just man, who may ransom his brethren and make agreement unto God for them! He must be Himself a pre-existent One, Himself a creating One, Himself the possessor of a kingdom; and this, His Greatness, must be shadowed before men's eyes, until their eyes can be prepared for the brightness of the reality. Oh! what must have been the sin which needed this! How fatal the fall, how extensive the ruin, for which no remedy could avail, but this! That this should be, is

alone sufficient evidence of its need. That it should be at all, is a wonder to make our hearts tremble under its truth: that it should be without a cause, would be a blasphemous thought in the weakest mind.

And who, then, can make us believe, that our hearts have no sin?

Who, then, can make us believe, that other foundation could any man lay for future hope, but this one, which God has seen needful; and has, therefore, laid?

Who, then, can make us believe, that eternity has no dangers for "us," if this sacrifice avail us nothing—if we receive this grace of God in vain?

CHAPTER V.

PROPHECY.

ARBITRARY DIVISION STILL—THREE HUNDRED YEARS —CLOSE OF FIRST GREAT DIVISION—MORE CLEAR —MORE PARTICULAR—IMMEDIATE EXPRESSION OF WILL — STANDING RECORD — AWAITING WORLD'S JUDGMENT—REJECTION FORETOLD—AND ITS RESULTS—ATONEMENT DISTINCT—OLD PROPHECY ILLUSTRATED — GROUPINGS AND SEPARATIONS OF PROPHECY — GAP BEFORE FULFILMENT — SELF-LIMITED, SELF-FULFILLED—PROPHET'S HOPE BECOME PERSONAL.

THE division of prophecy, which we next assume in our view of the Bible, as a design commenced and carried through by the one God, is as arbitrary as our last division. We take merely the *books* of prophecy, comprising only a range of some three hundred years; and, yet, as we have so often repeated, prophecy is a necessary element of God's scheme, and pervades the whole. All God's works have been known unto Him from the beginning of the world; and He has constantly guarded His foreordainment, by pre-

vious intimations of that, which future ages were to bring into being. The book of Psalms is genuine prophecy, of an earlier stage; and the books of Moses, as containing the groundwork of the plan, and yet pointing to the great One, in whom the plan would centre, are prophetical in their essential character. There is much advantage, however, in comprising these books of prophecy in a separate division, as they form the close of the first great division of God's design, when Moses gives place to the prophet like unto him; when the great body of prophecy finds its fulfilment; when all unfulfilled prophecy is no longer limited to one people, but takes a universal character, and has reference to a time, when there shall be but "one fold, and one shepherd," for all the sons of Adam.

The declarations of prophecy were vague, when the distance of the promised seed of the woman was to be measured by thousands of years. As the time lessened, the manner of deliverance began to be more clearly shewn; and, now, when "the fulness of the appointed time" is drawing on, prophet after prophet pours forth his fresh

word; casting in some detached, and seemingly unimportant, element of the maturing plan. And our view of the value of accumulating prophecy, as the end draws on, is much assisted by the remembrance, that the prophets send forth the special word given to them, not only from different generations, but from different and distant lands. The God, who had placed His people in the land of their enemies, had done so for their sakes, and for His own; to chasten them, that they might yet remain His people; and to carry out the purpose, for which they had been made His people. It could matter little to the Holy Ghost, by Whom the holy men spake as they were moved, on what portion of the earth they might be; and whether Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem, or at Mizpah; (Jer. xl. 6;) or in Egypt; (ch. xliii. 8); whether "the word of the Lord" came unto Ezekiel, "in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar;" (Eze. i. 3;) or to Daniel, "by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel;" (Dan. x. 4;) it was the same God Who spoke, and for the same good purpose of His will. He assumes all previous prophecy *after*

Isaiah is at rest; and when the Babylonian is impending over Jerusalem, "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all My servants, the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them." (Jer. vii. 25.) And, as the time wears on, Jeremiah more earnestly presses the same truth. "From the thirteenth year of Josiah . . . even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking;" (ch. xxv. 3;) "and the Lord hath sent unto you all His servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them." (ver. 4.)

I. We may, therefore, consider this body of prophecy as the immediate expression of God's will. As the prophet of the new covenant says of that, which we have seen sadly confirmed, "the spirit speaketh expressly," (1 Tim. iv. 1,) so we have the same phrase under the old covenant,—"the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel." (Eze. i. 3.) And hence Peter's expression, in which, after referring to the evidence of eye and ear, which the chosen witnesses

had of the manifested Son, being not only eye-witnesses of His majesty," (2 Pet. i. 16,) but themselves hearing at the transfiguration God's own spoken attestation of His "beloved Son," (ver. 17, 18,) he speaks of the "word of prophecy," as even "more sure" than this clear evidence of the senses,—"Whereunto," he adds, "Ye do well, that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (ver. 19.) "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (ver. 20, 21.) Thus, this sure word confirms itself. No *man* can guide prophecy; for its fulfilment lies in an age, when he shall be dust. Abraham may assure his seed of Canaan; but he must be buried within an unpossessed inheritance. Moses may partly divide the land, and name the leader who shall finally divide it by lot; but he shall only see it from Mount Nebo. David may foretell the everlasting throne of his promised seed; but, when his seed

should be, there would be but his tomb to shew, that David had been. Jeremiah may forewarn Zedekiah; but he cannot guide the great king of Babylon to his conquest; nor can he fulfil the seemingly contradictory statements, that the captive king shall see his conqueror, but not see the land of his captivity. Daniel may caution Nebuchadnezzar to lengthen out his tranquillity, by righteousness, and by mercy to the poor, under the sentence awaiting his pride; (Dan. iv. 27;) but he had no power over the king's reason, to remove, or to restore it, as the right time might be. The fulfilment of the prophecy is its confirmation as God's forespoken word, whilst it attests the purpose which called prophecy into existence.

The prophecies of the woman's seed have a further value to us, who rest upon that seed of the woman as the foundation of all the hopes, which are assured through Him, that *we* Christians have not had the guardianship of them. They have all along been, and they still remain, in the custody of the people, who were raised up for their care—as *one* purpose of their being; and, whilst that people, *as a people*, disown the

fulfilment of their own prophecies, they still keep them for the public opinion of mankind as to the fact, whether they have been fulfilled, or not. The promised One was, in accordance with prophecy, a Jew; and a Jew of the specially restricted line: His chosen companions and witnesses, to whom was committed the office of continuing the revelation which He began, were also Jews; and their great argument with their fellow Jews was, that their own Scriptures proved that "this Jesus," (Acts xvii. 2, 3,) whose preachers they were, is the Christ of their own prophecies. It was thus that the Apostles restricted their first teaching to the Jews,—"children of the stock of Abraham . . . to you is the word of this salvation sent." (Acts xiii. 26.) "Ye men of Israel, Why marvel ye at this?" (Acts. iii. 12.) "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus." (ver. 13.) "Those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." (ver. 18.) "Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the

Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren." (ver. 22.) "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." (ver. 24) "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed, shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed." (ver. 25.) "Unto you" (Jews) "first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you; in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (ver. 26.) "It was necessary," said Paul to the Jews at Antioch, "that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles." (ch. xiii. 46.)

This rejection of the Christ by His people is so far from affecting God's plan, that we have it as an added testimony of prophecy, which had recorded, that He should be "despised and rejected of men;" (Isa. liii. 3;) that the very people ("*we*") for whose "transgressions"

(ver. 5) He was wounded, should "esteem Him not;" (ver. 3;) and we trace out the wonderful nature of God's governing Providence, as we perceive, that the very undeniable miracles of the Christ bring Him to His prophesied death. "This man doeth many miracles," (John xi. 47; xii. 18, 19,) they said. There was one man raised from the dead, who brought the whole world after Him. There seemed to them no remedy, but that this "one man should die for the people;" (ch. xi. 50;) and, as the power was gone from them, for their previous rebellions, they could only carry out his death by the Roman power, so that His hands and His feet should be pierced in accordance with prophecy; that He should be "numbered with the transgressors," (Ps. xxii. 16; Isa. liii. 12,) that He should be raised up for them to stare and look upon Him, (Ps. xxii. 17,) as they clamoured around the cross with the very words of prophecy upon their lips. (Ps. xxii. 8; Matt. xxvii. 43.)

Our great hold, however, is, that there lie the prophecies, still in the keeping of the Jews. We would not take them from them; they could not

be in better hands. They have disowned the Christ; and let all the world judge between us whether they have rightly so done. No other one is come, but that One; that One who alone fulfilled in His short public life the prophecies of thousands of years. No other one has performed the Christ's miracles. That One alone came to that temple, which the Christ was to make greater by His presence; (Hag. ii. 9; Mal. iii. 1;) and it is almost a doubt, whether even the basement of that temple exists to see another Christ. "The sacrifice and the oblation" (Dan. ix. 27) have ceased, as prophecy had connected their close with the cutting off "of Messiah the Prince;" (ver. 26;) and the Jews, as they wander about from land to land, scattered and yet united, still hold up their prophecies that all men may see, that there is a vail still "upon their heart;" (2 Cor. iii. 15;) but a vail which shall one day be taken away. (ver. 16.)

II. And this body of prophecy thus confirmed, stands as the main connecting link between the past and the future.

As the Spirit uses one instrument after another, the coming word is founded upon all that went before. The people addressed are the same people; living under the same miraculous government; bound by the same law of constant sacrifice. As history was, of necessity, closely interwoven with prophecy, the characters of history often giving their prophecies as a portion of the narration; so prophecy must have its constant allusion to the men, amongst whom the words were spoken, and its perpetual reference to past times. Thus, the kings of history are the kings of prophecy, in whose times and to whose ears the future was foretold; and unimportant persons find their places, both in prophecy and history, preserved, like the fossils of an early age found equally in distant lands, to attest their existence at the same time. And thus, the language of prophecy has reference to the known occurrences which have been periods in the world's being—the general sin, which had left every heart "desperately wicked;" (Jer. xvii. 9;) the flood; the call in Abraham; the law; whilst

the men of that early day, would find mention, as well known names, needing neither explanation nor comment,—such as Noah, Job, Moses. We cannot conceive prophecy, but as caused by the events which history records, and as preparing the way for the history of facts, which are yet to be.

III. And thus these prophets rapidly, compared with the previous periods of prophecy, completed all that remained to be foretold of the scheme in design. Suffering had already formed an element of redemption in prophecy; but the *cause* of the suffering was now distinctly given, and the sufferings which David had sketched received more full illustration. That the coming one "should be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," (Isa. liii. 3,) might be inferred from the book of Psalms; but there is now the distinct idea of personal atonement,—of the suffering, which belonged to sin, being laid upon an innocent being. "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth;" (ver. 9;) and *the cause*, that He seemed "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," was, "He hath borne *our* griefs, and

carried *our* sorrows." (ver. 4.) He was wounded for *our* transgressions; He was bruised for *our* iniquities." (ver. 5) "We have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (ver. 6.) This is plain language; and, two hundred years later, Daniel, as he marks a time for the death of the Messiah, states expressly, that He shall "be cut off, but not for Himself." (Dan. ix. 26.)

And, now, as the time draws near—near by comparison, since the latest prophecy leaves four hundred years to elapse before the Christ's appearance—minor details are given of varied facts, seemingly unimportant in themselves, which would, however, on that account, make it utterly impossible that they could all be fulfilled in any but the One, of whom they were spoken. That the Christ should be numbered with transgressors, and yet have a rich man's grave; (Is. liii. 9;) that His death should be followed by the cessation of the daily sacrifice; (Dan. ix. 27;) that He should do such and so many miracles as eye had never before seen, (Isa. xxxv. 5,) and yet give His back to the smiters—hide not His "face

from shame and spitting;" (ch. l. 6;) that He should enter His city in a certain manner; (Zec. ix. 9;) that a certain precise sum should be the price of His betrayal, and expended in a certain purchase; (ch. xi. 12;) that He should have a special messenger to prepare His way; (Mal. iii. 3;) these were details of the Christ, which could only be controlled to unite in His one person, by the same mind and the same power, which had established them as marks of the Christ. And, as prophecy will soon cease to be, so far as the coming of the woman's seed is concerned, the glimpses which David had of his heir, "that should sit upon his throne," receive singular illustration. David foresaw that His body should not see corruption; and He has Himself told us, that His time in death was foremarked by Jonah: David saw the cross in prospect, but only a portion of the scene, which it was left for Isaiah to complete: David knew that the coming One was to fulfil God's will; and Daniel shewed that the fulfilled will left needless the sacrifices of every previous age: David could speak of the familiar friend's trea-

chery; but Zechariah could go further, and count the pieces of silver paid into his hand.

And, yet, strikingly as we see the design of the Great Author in the groupings of these varied and closing prophesies; in the allotments to each instrument of the share which he is to bear in the work, of which he can see no more than his own part, and that dimly; there is, perhaps, no portion of the whole mighty plan, which more strongly marks the designing mind, than the gap which occurs between prophecy and fulfilment. The tide of prophecy seemed to be rolling onward with an accelerating force; the rare prophecy had become frequent; the obscure had become clear; when prophecy is suddenly arrested, and all light is withdrawn. Why this sudden darkness? That the *cause* may be sought,—that the enquiring mind may understand, that prophecy is closed, and that fulfilment is at hand. And the period is of such extent, that all collusion between prophecy and fulfilment shall be impossible. The various prophets themselves have lived ages from each other; and each has spoken a mere fragment, which is unconnected and useless, till ful-

filment shall come to re-connect the seemingly scattered links of God's design; and, now, when the last has spoken, some ten generations are to pass through all the stages of life, to know decay, decrepitude, second childhood, death, before one ray of fulfilling light shall burst upon this purposed darkness. And, yet, this purposed darkness carries with it its own justification, its own period, its own proof of purpose: it closes with its own limit. The old covenant ends with notice *when* the new covenant shall begin—"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." (Mal. iv. 5, 6.) This would, in *some way*, be fulfilled: there would be some token that this messenger was present. And we know, that the clue was taken up just where Malachi had thus dropped it. Four hundred years after, a promise is given by an angel, that a son shall be born to childless parents—"And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their

God." (Lu. i. 16.) And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the Lord; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (ver. 17.) Here is the prophecy of Malachi taken up in its very words; and, yet, what would avail the claim, unless this unborn babe should not only be a man who should carry out the angel's sketch of his office, but should precede One to fulfil all the conditions of prophecy with reference to the Christ? And, then, when the child is born, his father resumes for him the angelic destination,—"Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways." (Lu. i. 76.) And this prophet is eight days old! Will he pass the diseases of childhood? Will he have either the taste, or the desire, to be the mere messenger of another? to have none but a borrowed light? to have no name, but as another shall make it for him? And, yet, when all this is—when this child of angelic promise reaches his manhood, to commence a life of privation with express re-

ference to the expected preaching *of another;* when he points out that other as the One, whom he is sent to precede; when he disowns all personal credit, and will own no honour and no pleasure but as derived from that One; and when that One assumes this, His designated character, performs the promised miracles of the Christ, fulfils all the other details of prophecy; we can hardly fail to say,—This is the messenger of Malachi—this is Elias, which was to come! (Matt. xi. 14;) this is the one sent to maintain the connexion of God's great design, to form the binding link between the old and the new covenants.

IV. As we perceive the object of this great body of prophecy to bring out details, which may serve as so many future marks by which to identify the Seed of the Woman, we cannot but observe how *personal* becomes the language. There is much of the vagueness of early prophecy about David, much as he speaks of the Heir of his endless kingdom, from his using the first person; but these later prophets speak of another One, upon whom each sets some distinct character, such as could not well be mistaken. Isaiah

might seem, at first, only to extend David's idea of a suffering Christ; but that He should not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, (Isa. xlii. 3,) speaks a gentleness, which well accords with His silence before His accusers —"as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." (ch. liii. 7.) The raging priests would little remember their prophet in the judgment hall of Pilate; but the loving John would not be so forgetful; and the look, which sent Peter to his tears, would remind him, that that was the patience of the prophesied Christ—of the voluntary Sacrifice.

The time set by Daniel we believe to have been the origin of the general expectation throughout the world, which brought the wise men from the East and which led men to muse in their hearts over the Baptist, whether he were the Christ or not; but Daniel did more than establish the period of the Christ—he established such a character to the period as could not be mistaken; such as we named as the special condemnation of His people's rejection—the termination of the sacrifices of the law. From the very time of the fall

sacrifice had been: when the Messiah was cut off, sacrifice was not to be: a change, so material in the providence of the God of prophecy, could not be without observation.

And, then, Zechariah has similar determining points. When Judas repented himself, as he saw that his Master purposed to die; we can imagine the Satan, to whom he had given entrance, bringing to his memory the Scripture, which had foreseen his sin; and that he cast away with horror the thirty pieces which had been known as his Master's goodly price—that the sense of this foreknowledge might assist the tempter's purpose and cut him off from hope. So, again, when the risen Lazarus was a witness, whom the glad people received as surely bearing his testimony to their acknowledged Christ; (John xii. 18;) it was no chance that brought Him to Jerusalem upon the ass' colt of Zechariah. He, who said, "I thirst," (John xix. 28,) before He said, "It is finished;" (ver. 30;) He, who sent Peter to pay the tribute money, with which the first-taken fish would supply him; He, who knew to what house the man with the pitcher upon his shoulder

would guide His disciples; He knew, where His messengers would find the ass' colt ready for its prophesied office, and the willingness with which the owners would send it. These are the final concentrations of prophecy; all the more precious in their minuteness, as conveying to us, at once, a memory of the infinite nature of the God to whom the grand and the minute are equally and necessarily matter of knowledge and controul; and a sense of the entireness and value of the design, thus superintended to the value of a coin and to the place of a beast of burden by the One, Who placed four thousand years between redemption and the fall. If we have watched the dealings of God with ourselves, we all understand this perfection of knowledge in the minuteness of our Heavenly Father's watchful care; in the important bearing of the smallest things upon our welfare in eternity; and, if the care of each one soul is thus matter of interest and design to the High and Lofty One inhabiting eternity, we can look upward to conceive the same One, designing and perfecting in its greatest and its least details the redemption of all the souls of His children of earth.

CHAPTER VI.

GOSPEL HISTORY.

PROPHETIC TIMES IMMENSE—FULFILLING TIMES BRIEF —THIRTY YEARS—GAP TAKEN UP—GREAT CARE—NO MIRACLE—GREATEST—MAIN OBJECT FINISHED —STILL, PURPOSE PROGRESSIVE—PROPHECY FULFILLED IN PART—EVE—ABRAHAM—DAVID—DANIEL—PROPHECY OF RESULTS—THE KINGDOM BEGUN END OF DISPERSION—ALLOTMENT AND INTERWEAVINGS OF WORK.

In our contemplation of the great scheme of the Godhead, we have passed over ranges of time, which startle a finite mind by their immensity: we have been compelled to compress periods of hundreds and thousands of years of prophecy into one brief survey: now, that we reach fulfilment, we have the definiteness of God's "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," well marked by the brevity of the time, in which centre the completed prophecies of successive ages. From Eve to Malachi, ear after ear has listened to the voice of the Spirit, speaking of a Redeemer, who should be; and,

now, that the Redeemer comes, our present division of Gospel History, some thirty years, embraces the great mass of all that has been done and said since the world was made.

We saw the great mark of a purpose, in the space of four hundred years left blank between the last announcement of prophecy, that a messenger (Mal. iii. 1) should precede the Lord, coming suddenly to His own temple; and the appearance of the messenger to "make straight" (Isa. xl. 3) the way of his Lord: we see the same care in the manner in which the prophecy is taken up for completion. It is known throughout the world, even amidst the heathen, that the promised Heir of David, the King of the Jews, is coming. In the distant East, wise men are watching the heavens for some sign, which shall designate the "Star out of Jacob, the Sceptre to rise out of Israel." (Num. xxiv. 17.) The very Samaritans, with their half-pagan service, know that Messias should come and tell them all things. (John iv. 25.) And God's own people were in a state of agitation, ready to muse in their hearts of any man, claiming to be God's

messenger, "whether he were the Christ, or not." (Luke iii. 15.) And, thus, to guard against error —to prevent that confusion which the human mind has ever been ready to make between the master and the servant—the messenger of Malachi comes with a character upon him, which no other messenger of the Most High seems ever to have had—that he "did no miracle." (John x. 41.) He was simply to point out the Christ, by whom the miracles of the Christ should be wrought; but no miracle of any kind was to leave opening for a misconception of his own office—greater than any born of woman before Him, (Matt. xi. 11,) and yet less than the least in the long expected kingdom—seemingly without any support for his authority but that reflected from this Great One, whom he announced; and yet, in fact, performing that greatest miracle of describing the whole life of the Incarnate Son, as he points Him out as the only inhabitant of heaven, who could speak of heaven; "He that cometh from above, is above all—He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth." (John iii. 31, 32.)

Entering upon this portion of God's design, we find, in the history of these thirty years—

I. That the main object of the design has been completed;

II. That the design is still going on towards the perfecting of that work, which the Seed of the woman came to do;

III. That the separate witnesses of even this brief historic period have the same allotment of work and interweaving of detail as the distant witnesses of the old time.

I. The Master Mind has Himself opened out to us many secret things in the working of His original design. As we said before, He would know where to give an obscure and where a more clear announcement; and, when the risen Saviour opened the understanding of His disciples to understand the Scriptures, they were able to perceive the design of the shadows and figures of their law and to comprehend their transitory nature. We need still the same power of interpretation. It is recorded, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; (1 Cor. ii. 14;) "that no man can say

that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (ch. xii. 3.) We dwell upon such subjects as our present one, not to convince the unbeliever, who has neither eyes to see, nor ears to hear; but to encourage our own faith when defective; to prepare us for any moment of idleness or of weakness, when doubt may beset us; to enable us to succour the weakness, or the danger of our brethren. If there is such a person as an honest unbeliever—which one can scarcely conceive, since God guards the hearts of His people—he has always the readiest mode of satisfying his own mind by going straight to God in prayer. If his heart leads him, as David describes him, to prefer that there should be no God, he assumes that he cannot pray, and *therefore* does not pray; he assumes that revelation is impossible, and the Bible is *therefore* useless to him; or he rejects any portion of it, to which his heart objects as painful or dangerous, and *therefore*, again, the Bible is useless to him. To accept only such portions of God's teaching as we please and to hope for His heaven, is the same delusion as to hope for university honours without reading the needful

course; as to expect promotion in any service before we know the duties of the office which we seek.

The Gospel history shews us design in progress, although its great object has been effected. The fulfilment of prophecy is of two kinds; the one, in which prophecy is wholly fulfilled, and belongs only to the past; the other, in which prophecy is partially and mainly fulfilled, whilst there are portions of the design resting upon its main object, which still require to be carried out and matured.

In the first division are Balaam's prophecy of the "Star out of Jacob;" (Nu. xxiv. 17;) Isaiah's details of the scene at Calvary; (Isa. liii.;) Micah's designation of Bethlehem as the birthplace; (Mic. v. 2;) Haggai's glory to rest upon the temple which he saw building; (Hag. ii. 7, 9;) Zechariah's notices of the triumphal entry, of the traitor's price, and of the scattered apostles; (Zec. ix. 9; xi. 12; xiii. 7;) and Malachi's forerunning messenger. Of the current prophecy, of which there has been so much realized, that we have no doubt of that which is yet to be, there are many

portions. Even of those, which are assumed as definite, the mind might take up particulars which have clear reference to future time. It is the unity of mind which we mark throughout, which makes it scarcely possible to say of any the smallest passage of Scripture—"this is alone." The mind of Him, who said, "Let those words be," said it with reference to other things and other words.

Eve's prophecy has reached the fulness of the "appointed time" (Gal. iv. 4) for the sending forth of her seed; and great was the resistance of the serpent and *his* "generation of vipers" stirred up against Him. The seed of the woman "was in all points tempted like as we are;" (Heb. iv. 15;) and more than we, in the presence of possessions, which the enemy has not since attempted, in agonies in Gethsemane, in seeming abandonments on the cross, such as our minds can scarcely conceive; and He achieved his victory, having been "manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil," (1 John iii. 8,) "having spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them;" (Col. ii. 15;) "taking part of flesh and blood.

that through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, *i. e.* the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15.)

Still,—the work finished, the atonement offered,—the enemy is not yet "bound;" (Rev. xx. 2;) he still "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;" (1 Pet. v. 8;) and the end is not until his power be finally destroyed, and "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." (Rev. xi. 15.)

Thus, the promises to Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, are yet in the future, when our Lord closes His earthly course. "The nations of the earth" (Gen. xxii. 18) are not yet all blessed in Him; the sentence of Moses upon those who would not hear the prophet like unto him, had not yet commenced, (Deut. xviii. 19,) although they had been heard to invoke His blood upon them, and upon their children, (Matt. xxvii. 25;) David might look down and see his promised seed, as he saw Him when he spoke the 22nd Psalm, but there would be no traces of the throne of the 110th Psalm—the glory of the 102nd Psalm

was veiled, and that of the 45th Psalm was yet to be. And, could Daniel, also, have had a second evidence, that he was "greatly beloved" (Dan. ix. 23) in tracing out the Messiah's death, and the closing of sacrifice (Dan. vii. 13); there would be yet those distant days, when the Son of man should come in the clouds of heaven (Matt. xxiv. 30), as the Son of Man Himself repeated, and should assume that "everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away." These were yet for futurity. The kingdom of heaven was proclaimed, and every man pressed into it (Lu. xvi. 16) who felt his need of a Saviour; the one shepherd, gathering first his members of that fold, as a preparation for the one great fold, which should enclose His people of every tongue, and kindred, and nation.

II. And, thus, as the fulfilment of prophecy to the Jewish nation, was simply the commencement of the full and final development of all prophecy, this present, so to speak, collects the substance of the whole past world, as a foundation for the explanations of the future. The world had existed four thousand years; and yet,

as we now see, there were to be two thousand years, and the future still undeveloped; and we do not yet see, whether the period to follow the Redeemer shall equal, or exceed that which preceded Him. These thirty years of fulfilment have a future, and are thus years of prophecy. The Redeemer, whom Daniel and Himself have pourtrayed as gathering His elect by His holy angels from the four winds of heaven at His second coming, collected them first as His people by human agency; and the progressive design is still marked by the previous arrangement in prophecy of the coming details of His advancing kingdom. The awful sentence upon Jerusalem, not knowing the day of her visitation, the days that belonged unto her peace; despising and rejecting the Hope of Israel; decreeing His death for herself and her people, and yet invoking upon both His blood of the atonement as avenging blood; this sentence, obscurely intimated in prophecy, even from the early days of Moses, had now its more solemn forewarnings. The Saviour, as He wept over her coming sorrows, knew them too just, too needful for the full accomplishment

of all that must be; too necessary an ingredient in that cup of bitterness, which was yet to be medicinal to the final saving of His own nation, not to leave the sentence still sure. And His words set such marks upon the coming desolation, of which David had spoken, that His elect should not be deceived by any false lights, that they should be safe amidst scenes of horrors, such as the world had not yet seen. That generation should not pass away, till all these things had been,—although there should be time to proclaim the truth through all the cities and villages of Israel; (Matt. x. 23;) the "people that should come" (Dan. ix. 26) would encompass the doomed Jerusalem with armies, and set up the ensigns of their idolatry, the "overspreading of abominations" (Dan. ix. 27; Matt. xxiv. 15); close upon God's own temple; and, whilst His people should thus be warned to flee unto the mountains, so that not one hair of their heads should perish, the hapless city should he laid level with the ground, not one stone left upon another. Who, that reads the details and knows of their exact fulfilment, has the slightest doubt, not merely

that Jerusalem was designed to be destroyed, *so* destroyed, but that her destruction is part of a design? And, thus, the same One, who speaks of her total ruin, speaks of the desolation as only for a season; as His word, which sent Judah of old to Babylon, had fixed the date of her return. The old prophecies, which looked to the awful times which have swept over Judah, since the blood of Calvary has rested upon her, and which foresaw her present dispersion, have, also, their sure word of her restoration; and He, who said distinctly, "Jerusalem *shall* be trodden down of the Gentiles," (Lu. xxi. 24,) added the period of limitation, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." He, who would not gather His people into one, until He had given the heathen of that day four hundred years of forbearance, will not resume His people, until all His sheep shall be gathered out of every fold. And *they*, also *shall* be gathered. "God hath not cast off His people whom He foreknew." (Rom. xi. 2.) "Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (ver. 25.) And, then, how bright the prospect of the times when

they shall be restored! "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the *world*, what shall the receiving of them be?" (Rom. xi. 15) "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" (ver. 12.)

And as these prophecies of the fulfilling Saviour speak of the future, they, of necessity, speak of work for His coming servants, as there had been special work for each of His servants, who had gone to their rest before the dark period of four hundred years. "Go ye, and teach all nations," (Matt. xxviii. 19,) was His parting mission to His chosen followers and witnesses; "preach the Gospel to every creature;" (Mark xvi. 15;) whilst His assurance of the one final fold assured the final success of their work; and whilst He guaranteed them, also, sufficient time for the general preaching of the truth, "The Gospel must first be published among all nations;" (Ma. xiii. 10;) "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. xxiv. 14.)

III. The servants of the Christ having, as we said, His work to do in bringing His people into His fold, there is the same interest in observing the connexion of their work, as in observing the interweavings of the service of their brethren the prophets. As the Evangelists, to whom this division limits itself, wrote at different times, so they wrote for different readers. Matthew, as writing for his own people, speaks of their habits as readily as any of them would do, without reference or explanation. Mark, writing for general readers, and giving the same particulars as Matthew, knows it necessary to explain, that "the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not; holding the tradition of the Elders." (Mark vii. 3.) The writers, before Jerusalem fell, speak of its fall; the writers, after the fall, are silent. The earlier writers suppress names, which might be exposed to the malice of the existing powers in Jerusalem: when those powers had ceased to be, John speaks freely of all that passed in the closing days of his Lord upon earth. Each separate witness has given his detail after his

own manner; and John, writing long after the others, is enabled to add connecting links, which make clear many an obscure narrative. The miracles and parables, which had been fully given, are not repeated, except in one marked case, upon which depended one of those conversations of the Christ with His people, which John has specially devoted himself to preserve; whilst earlier miracles, before the great body of the disciples was formed, and those details, which could only be given by one, who "followed Jesus" (John i. 37,) on the testimony of the Baptist, and remained to receive His last charge from the cross, are given at great length, and with great minuteness. The more we study the four Gospels as *one* part of *one* work, the more we understand the advantage of *four* Evangelists. They are separate witnesses, more convincing in their combined evidence, than any one could be in his single testimony. We are often called to admire some earthly cause, in which the evidence is carefully preserved before it is given in court: links of evidence seem constantly defective, until some witness deposes to some

little accidental circumstance, which is at once seen to combine with the detached portions, and to educe from them harmony and conviction.

A survey of the Gospel will offer multitudes of such cases, of which we can only take examples:—

I. The words which led to our Lord's conviction, are stated by Matthew. "This (One) said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days." (Matt. xxvi. 61.) St. Mark gives the fact with a variance in the expression; (Mark xiv. 58;) and the former gives our Lord's admission in the Eastern form of assent; (Matt. xxvi. 64;) and yet neither of these, nor Luke, states, that our Lord had ever used the expression. John, as he gives the words and the place where they were spoken, (John iii. 19,) shews, that it was in the earliest days of our Lord's public ministry; and thus, possibly, before Matthew was called.

II. All the Evangelists narrate the miraculous feast to the five thousand, each merely giving his own little fact, as it might impress his own mind; but, as we read the account of Matthew, we can-

not conceive why our Lord should constrain "His disciples to get into a ship and to go away, whilst He sent the multitudes away." (Matt. xiv. 22.) The same men who had arranged the crowds by fifties and ministered their meal, would seem the most ready means for dispersing them. John, however, whilst he explains that Philip and Andrew were the speakers and why our Lord used His words to Philip, (John vi. 5—8,) tells us that the miracle had awakened all the Jewish feeling for a temporal Christ, and that the five thousand were ready to "take Him by force and make Him a King." (ver. 15.) And this, alas! was no endeavour for the Apostles to restrain, who were only too anxious for it themselves; and were already planning who should be greatest in His kingdom! And it was therefore needful to send them away, lest they should assist, rather than allay, the passions of the crowd.

III. Matthew, when he proceeds to group the miracles of the Christ, and when he has spoken of the cleansed leper, (Matt. viii. 3;) the centurion's distant servant healed by the authority of the absent Christ, (ch. viii. 8, 13;) Peter's

wife's mother raised from her fever to minister instantly to them (ver. 15) in fully restored health, adds, "When the even was come, they brought unto Him many" of the "possessed" (ver. 16) for cure. Why should they await the even for the cure? would be our natural enquiry, did not Mark supply the reason, missing in Matthew—because it was "on the Sabbath-day" (Mark i. 21) that these things were; because it was from the synagogue that Jesus passed into Peter's house to raise his wife's mother; (ver. 29, 30;) because it was not till the even had closed the Sabbath, that they could bear the burdens of their sick.

IV. And so, immediately after, when Matthew describes our Lord as seeing the faith of them who brought "a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed," (Matt. ix. 2,) we do not perceive how their faith differed from that of other friends bringing their sick to the healing Christ; but Mark and Luke clear the obscurity by shewing, that the friends could not come near to Jesus "for the press" (Mark ii. 4) of people, who came to hear Him; "and when they could not find by

what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch, into the midst, before Jesus." (Luke v. 19.) How natural! how clear! how convincing this testimony!

V. Our human hearts are startled by our Lord's declining to see His mother, as Matthew tells us—"Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee;" (Matt. xii. 47;) and it almost seems to us inconsistent with the loving care and bequest of the same One in His death-hour, that He should only point to his disciples and say, "Behold my mother and my brethren." (ver. 49.) But we have another witness, Mark, and he tells us, that when the multitude came together, "so that they could not so much as eat bread," (Mark iii. 20,) "His friends heard of it," and "they went out to lay hold on him; for they said, He is beside Himself." (ver. 21.) And then, when the narrative goes on to bring them to the door, (ver. 31,) with this purpose on their minds, we understand how He, who knew what was in man, thus easily defeated their purpose; and, whether

Mary was with them in a moment of motherly fear and weakness; or, as is more probable, was with them, as at the feast of Cana, to speak her full confidence in Him; love to her would equally spare her the sight of a fruitless struggle, and the hearing of a necessary rebuke upon their kinsmen.

VI. And, yet once more, we have the closing scenes of redemption sketched by three Evangelists, but still dark in material points. We have Zechariah's words fulfilled in the triumphal entry of the Christ, and in His immediate betrayal—His glory seeming to prepare His fall; and we have, also, a remarkable instance of faith in a female disciple, announced to "be told for a memorial of her," wheresoever the "Gospel shall be preached in the whole world;" (Matt. xxvi. 13;) but we have no clear connexion between these things, until John speaks. The beloved disciple tells us of a little family at Bethany, dear to their Lord; upon which He had permitted heavy sorrow to come, although, when the chastening had been, He raised His friend from a four-days' grave. John tells us, that so manifest was this miracle, that the ruling Jews could

imagine no way to silence the evidence of Lazarus, but to send him back to the grave (John xii. 10), whence Jesus had raised him; and we understand the silence of those, who wrote, whilst those same men yet lived and ruled. John tells us, that this miracle was the cause of the popular enthusiasm which greeted the Christ with Hosannas. (ver. 18.) John tells us, that the woman, whose love devoted her best gifts as its evidence, (ver. 3,) was the sister of the raised Lazarus, rejoicing to shew her gratitude for the brother given back to her; and even in the narrative of her affection, we find the working element of Judas' treachery, as he coveted that which might have been given to his bag. After these explanations of John, Matthew again restores the connexion by shewing to us Judas passing almost directly from this supper to the council of rulers. (Matt. xxvi. 14, 15.)

These are all beautiful correspondences; and all the more precious to us, as we know them no more accidental than the care which holds the sun in its place, and without which not one sparrow falleth to the ground.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ACTS AND WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLES.

CLOSE OF REVELATION—DISTINCTIVE MARK OF IMPOSTURE — STILL, A FUTURE—STILL PROPHECY—CHANGE PRODUCED BY FINISHED OBJECT—WEEKLY REST—MODE OF COVENANT—BOND OF UNION—NATURE OF PRESENT PROPHECY—IMMEASURABLE—CONTINUED ALLOTMENT, AND INTERWEAVINGS OF WORK—CHOOSINGS—IDENTITY OF DOCTRINE—AND OF EXTERNALS — CLEAR LIGHT—PERSONAL REDEMPTION.

WE close revelation with the acts and writings of those, to whom our Lord delivered up the charge of preparing the world for His final coming. All prophecy is thus completed, so far as *written* revelation has reached, or will reach. We have distinct teaching, that there is not to be another Gospel, that no man may add to, any more than he may diminish from, the words of God's one book; (Gal. i. 8; Rev. xxii. 18;) and there is thus no more simple and safe condemnation of any new religion, whether original, or professing to be connected with, or derived from

ours, than the claim to a revelation. Such a claim at once falsifies the teaching, and convicts the teacher as an impostor. Prophecy is, of course, however, unfulfilled in many particulars, which have yet to be developed in future time. If the serpent was boldly resisting the Son of Man by personal temptation; by surrounding Him with possession and disease, that some might be too much for the Christ's power; by leaving Him in the wilderness "for a season" only, that he might resume his temptations at other periods, which are usually periods of weakness to men; we know, alas! from a very brief view of the existing world, that the enemy is not yet bound; that many families of the earth are still unblessed; that the enemies of the Lord are not yet made His footstool; that even the preparatory gathering of God's scattered people is not yet begun, much as the signs of the times have often seemed to herald the day. And thus the closing history of revelation will still have its fulfilment of the past, and its foretellings of the future; whilst there will be the same combined unity in seeming confusion—men of all varieties

of habit, speaking each his own language of heart, and yet all combined by the teaching of the same one spirit, who divideth "to every man severally" his work "as He will." (1 Cor. xii. 11.)

I. Looking upon this period, first, as a *perfected* portion of the great design, we find, that a great change has passed upon God's dealings. The Saviour *has been*. For the first time, since revelation began, redemption is shewn as it was designed to be; and the work of redemption is set forth as "finished." It was the Master's word, as He fulfilled the last element of prophecy, and bowed His head to die; and His servants take up His word, and call upon all to rest simply upon that, which *has been* done. When the question comes, "What must I *do* to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30) the answer comes, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (ver. 31.) And that this being saved, is the result, not of fresh work on God's part, but of that which has been, is constantly repeated. "God *hath made* Him to be sin for us;" (2 Cor. v. 21;) "Christ *hath* redeemed us from the curse of the law;" (Gal. iii. 13;) "Who,

his own self, bare our sins in His body on the tree;" (1 Pet. ii. 23;) "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" (1 John i. 7;) "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) And, as the work is done, for which the children of Abraham were made a distinct people, they are no longer God's sole people, however He may yet keep them together, that their part in His great work may be seen and known by all generations. There the Jews are throughout the greatest portion of the remaining Gospel history; but, whilst He, who preached before the Gospel unto "Abraham," still preaches it to his children, all the nations of the earth have found their way to the universal Christ.

It was in an early day, that the unity of men was destroyed by a miraculous multitude of languages. (Gen. xi. 7.) Their restored unity in Him, who prayed that they all might be one, is implied, when every man hears in his own tongue from the same lips, "the wonderful works of God" (Acts ii. 11) in Christ. The Gospel History is no longer the history of the Jews, except as

the Jews have owned their Christ. And, as we look upon the fulfilment of the old figures of the law; as we behold the ceremonial law fading away, whilst the moral law of the unchanged God is only extended and confirmed; we see how broad were the conceptions of the Deity, how far beyond the earthly range of the Jewish mind. Before the Jews were, in that earliest day when the sons of God shouted for joy at the sight of the world, in which everything was very good, it pleased the Almighty Maker, who might have willed a perfect world into being as He had willed the light to brighten it, to work that He might seem to rest, and thus to make *rest* a mark of His world—make a rest the condition of each mans' being—a perpetual sign of that final rest which awaited His people. (Heb. iv. 9.) And when His people were formed as peculiarly His own, this rest was made the sign between Him and them; this special mark of obedience, designed for earliest and latest man, was claimed from this especial people, because they were to be known as God-governed to the whole world. And now, that the Saviour

has been, the sabbath is gone, buried in a temporary grave, like Him, its first author, by whom all things were made, (John i. 3,) that it might rise from the grave with a new glory. The Saviour's own people had mourned Him as lost for three days; but, to the world at large, He and His religion would seem lost during the forty days spent with His disciples in teaching them the things that pertain unto the kingdom of heaven. And from those forty days of silence springs the revived sabbath's rest, still the one day in seven, whilst that same creating One, who had His glory with the Father before the world was, (John xvii. 5,) marks the day of His victory over the grave as the new sabbath of His people: from that day there should be this one mark of those who own and who disown Him.

And we find corresponding changes in other things, which had seemed laws for man, but which we now find to have been laws only to the Jews for man's sake. From the period of Abraham's call there had been one mode of admission into covenant with God marked by a peremptory

law—"the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people." (Gen. xvii. 14.) The Jews understood the value of their covenant, and were steady in their recognition of it, by this the outward act of their faith; but now, the Saviour has been, and circumcision is no more. The Jews may, if they will, cling to their old forms; but for all Christians, for all making their covenant with Jesus, baptism is now what circumcision was.

And, if circumcision seemed so essential a part of the religion of God, as being specially His ordinance, even yet more the passover. The Jews were finally freed from the land of their prophesied captivity (Gen. xv. 13) by a general judgment upon all the first-born of their oppressors, and deliverance by blood, the great lesson of Abel and of Noah, took a new form, as the blood of the sacrificed Lamb became the token to the destroying angel to pass over the sanctified and saved house. And thenceforward this ordinance became the memorial of the past earthly deliverance, and the figure of the great spiritual deliverance of later days, till "Christ our passover," should be "sa-

crificed for us." (1 Cor. v. 7.) The Christ has been, and the passover is gone; buried, like circumcision, in fulfilled prophecy, to rise from its grave under the new form of the second sacrament. Christ met His apostles to eat together their last passover before it was "fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke xxii. 16)—fulfilled in the death of the real Paschal Lamb, whom all previous sacrifice had foreshadowed; but the fulfilment was merely to precede the similar ordinance, which should occupy its place. All previous generations had looked forward to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," (John i. 29,) and now all should be called to "remember" Him.

And these are all strong marks of design: to prophecy is to shew more than foreknowledge—the design and the power to lead and to control. It has been a powerful argument against the deist to trace back all sacraments to their first appointment; to shew that every succeeding age in retrospect has owned the same origin, until we end in the acts of a dying and of a raised Redeemer; but our present view goes back to the

original acts and appointments of the same One under an earlier, under the earliest, dispensation, to perceive that these changes were intended marks of His perfecting plan; that, when the destroying angel passed over Egypt—when Abraham and all his household assumed God's covenant—when God rested and blessed the day of His rest—He had in His view the time when all these should undergo their needful change to distinguish the Christ's kingdom; He was even then ordaining the means of grace and strength for all generations of the Christ's people.

II. In this closing period of written revelation, as it is still an introductory period to ages, during which God should only publicly speak by His acts, however each individual Christian should have free communion with heaven through the promised and given Spirit, we still see prophecy—evidence that design is still going on; that fresh details of design are still from time to time to be brought into being. Thus, we have the prophecies of Agabus in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts xxi. 11) not simply with reference to Paul—although that he went "bound in the

Spirit to Jerusalem" (xx. 22) sufficiently shewed that his Master had special work for that servant's hand—work, which no other hand might do—work, bearing upon the great design of the world's conversion; but Agabus was, also, a messenger of famine, (xi. 28,) one of God's special means of chastening; and the chastening of God's people, far or near, has much effect in working out His purposes. Paul was instructed to speak of future heresy as the express word of the Spirit to him. (1 Tim. iv. 1.) Would that they, who are under its dominion, would consider how clearly they were foreseen and the *express* word of the Spirit on their doctrine! So clearly, indeed, is still enduring prophecy the sign of an enduring design, that we recognize the calm anticipations of Peter and of Paul of their approaching deaths, as simply intimating that their part in the work was done, and they might now enter into their rest. He, who had kept the times and the seasons in His own power; who had appointed to every man his time on earth; who giveth the means of working to all according to their several ability; He had

used these instruments to the extent of His design; and as their work for Him had prepared and exercised them for their future service above, He admitted them now to their awaiting home.

There are yet other prophecies which we cannot yet measure. Modes have been devised for sounding the depths of the skies, although our nearest approximations reach inconceivable numbers, and still leave space without measure; and some, many, have essayed to fathom the depths of prophecy, with the usual result of reaching to a manifestly wrong conclusion, and with the same pervading lesson that God was more willing that we should ascertain the range of His creation than that we should divine His counsel secret to us. There are all the genuine characters of prophecy about St. John's Revelations, convincing us that the darkness upon them is the same designed darkness as that which once sat upon the visions of Isaiah—that the days of final fulfilment will enable us to look back upon clear words, and wonder that they were ever dark. And, as we seek resting-places

for the soles of our feet in attempting the difficulties of unrevealed prophecy, we have many a reference to old times to remind us that the same One is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last;" (Rev. xxii. 13;) that the windings up of time, as time merges in eternity, are likely to have the most close connexion with the beginnings of time; that, as "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," (Pr. iv. 18,)—as the light from above makes the Christian's path more clear, as he draws to the end and more manifestly marks his countenance with the reflected brightness of his intercourse with heaven, so, as time shall be about to cease, may the creatures of time expect to see most clearly what have been the whole arrangements of the one God for all His revelation, for all His providence.

III. As in the history of the first law, we saw the close connexion between the history and the writings of the men, of whom the history was spoken, we have the same interweaving of history under the new covenant. When the

Christ sent His apostles on their mission, He foretold them its result—anxiety and trial to themselves, final success to their word; and the narrative of the apostle's doings, and their many letters, shew that He had rightly cautioned them. They go forward to struggle and to suffer, but always to prevail: the enemy may resist them as he did their Master; but all his resistance shall end in his own discomfiture. This is the great comfort to us, who have to share their trials, though under a much milder form—to resist the same enemy, though much restrained in his power—to see the strength that was given to them for their victory, and to know the same strength open to us.

And it is useful as we look upon the working out of God's design after His kingdom is begun, to mark how entirely the servants preach doctrine in strict accordance with that of their Master. They are only sent; it is not their own Word; they have simply to convey to others that which they have themselves been taught. Whether we compare Gospel with Gospel, or whether we compare Gospel and Epistle, the same result follows—

strict identity of doctrine—free mercy, needed, purchased, given: hearts which must be cleansed, wholly changed by the power of God's own Spirit. And, as under the old covenant, the God of heaven and earth called just such men as He pleased, so, under the new, a similar freedom of choice has helped to shew *design* in the selection of instruments. There were twelve men chosen to follow Him, to see all His miracles, to know the certainty of His death, to eat and drink with Him in assurance of His real body after His resurrection; and these twelve were poor men, with all the imperfection of a human nature, contending amongst themselves for places in an unknown kingdom, but scattered in fear as soon as danger arose in following their Master. And these twelve were chosen specially on account of their seeming unfitness, a standing warning to every selected instrument against pride in self—"the foolish things of the world," (1 Cor. i. 27,) "the weak things of the world" (ver. 28), "and base things of the world, and things which are despised," did God choose "that no flesh should glory in His presence." (ver. 29.) And the

man, who is commissioned so to declare God's purpose in His choice, was a striking example of an arbitrary selection of intruments, and of the unity of work effected by the many chosen labourers. The twelve men were of varied infirmity of character, but, under the power of the same Spirit, they were all equally mighty in God's service, all equally preaching the same Christ, all giving out the same particulars of doctrine. They were the first unity, so to speak, formed of Christ's people; and He has prayed that the same one Spirit may gradually bring us all into one: wherever the Spirit gathers any number of His people together, we see the unity of hope and of peace spread over their countenances; and we can understand them all working together under the same agency, for the same Master, to the same end. He, who chose Matshew and John, chose also Paul; and it is in the teaching of Paul, that we recognize fully the One Mind. There had been no intercourse between Paul and the twelve; on the contrary, their only knowledge of him was as a persecutor. He was for three years preaching Christ before he and an

Apostle met. (Gal. i. 18.) They had their teaching from the lips of many days, and specially of those forty days hallowed as the last of the risen Saviour's presence; whilst Paul never knew his Lord, until, prostrate on the road, he raised his eyes to see Him in heaven. And yet the teaching of Paul, thus given by pure revelation, is identical with the teaching of the twelve taught day by day on earth. "I have received of the Lord," he says, that which I delivered unto you (1 Cor. xi. 23). "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. i. 12.) We should of course expect that the teaching of Jesus would be the same, whether He taught on earth or in heaven; but it is still a marked evidence of continued design to find teachers successively chosen to carry out certain teaching; and this design is more evident when we find an extraordinary choice. This man was a bigotted Jew, persecuting the Christians unto death; and there was clearly some portion of the work which needed to be done, for which the present workers were not suited and for which he was. Our view of

the need of this man to do his share of the allotted work, and of the oneness of the work in which all the labourers were engaged, is enlarged by perceiving that the revelation of Jesus to Paul was not confined to that which we might call *doctrine*, but included the marks of faith in used sacraments. Paul was not one to whom the command came to baptize all nations; but, when the jailer at Philippi embraced the offer of belief and salvation "he and all his" were "straightway baptized." (Acts xvi. 33.) And Paul teaches the Ephesians that as there is "one Lord and one faith," so is there only "one baptism," (Eph. iv. 5); and the Corinthians, "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) So Paul was not one of those who sat around the table when his Lord said, "do this in remembrance of Me;" but his assertion of delivering to his converts that only which he had received from the Lord had special reference to that very command. We do not pause to wonder over those who are indifferent to this will of their Lord, thus expressed equally before and after His death upon the cross, both as the Son

of Man on earth and as the Lord at the right hand of the throne in heaven. Our part now is to see the pervading Mind; to recognize the God of the passover checking the eager persecutor on the road to Damascus; to see an unchanged counsel in heaven during those two thousand years; and to remember that it is the counsel of the same One which, after two thousand more years, still attends us with the same purpose of love.

IV. We referred to the clearer light as the perfect day drew on; and, in these closing days of the written revelation, the nature of the real end of God's design begins to be more manifest. Under the old covenant, some have held the references to a future state to have been so obscure, that they have affected to doubt whether the Jews had a clear foreknowledge of a second being beyond the grave. One can hardly underderstand any such assertion on the part of any one who had more than the Jewish Scriptures before him, when we have our Lord's word that Abraham had a glad foresight of His day (John viii. 56), and that the Jews thought that they had

eternal life in their Scriptures (John v. 39;) and when we have His disciples' words, that their fathers in the wilderness "drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ," (1 Cor. x. 4;) that Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," (Heb. xi. 26;) that the earlier patriarchs "died in faith," having seen the promises "afar off," (ver. 13), and been "persuaded of them, and desired a better country, *i.e.*, an heavenly." (ver. 16.) Even, however, under the old law, we have Job's clear testimony to his knowledge of a living Redeemer, and of a personal appearance in his own flesh before his God, after worms had destroyed his body. And, if it be said, that Job's days were the patriarchal days, when there was free communion with heaven; David spoke of the flesh which should not see corruption (Ps. xvi. 10); Isaiah knew that "the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isa. xxvi. 19;) Daniel foresaw an awakening of "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. xii. 2.) These are, however, with the one great exception

of Job's bright testimony, general expressions, confident assertions of faith as to what shall be, but widely different from the language of those who have been with Jesus, and have basked in His light. The language of these latest words of Spirit-guided men is that of men rejoicing in a known and personal Saviour, speaking of things not only understood, but felt. "That which was from the beginning," John says, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." (1 John i. 1, 3.) "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, " says Peter, " when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of of His majesty." (2 Peter. i. 16). The " voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." (ver. 18.) And the knowledge of this personal Saviour leads to assured confidence in Him—to a certain expectation, such as even Elijah seems to have wanted with the chariot of fire at hand. "Christ,"

says Paul at Rome, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." (Phil. i. 20.) "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (ver. 21.) "I am in a strait betwixt two," (ver. 23,) "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (ver. 22) "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better." And, as the time drew more near, the wild beasts of Rome had no more power over his spirit than over that of Daniel. "At my first answer no man stood with me," (2 Tim. iv. 16,) "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me; . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion," (ver. 17;) and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." (ver. 18.) "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." (ver. 6.) "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (ver. 7.) "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." (ver. 8.)

This is the light, which God sheds upon the closing course of His people: this is the end for all His people, to secure and to mature which for them was His great design in Christ. And we know it, as Paul knew it, by the bright light, which we have seen beaming on the paths of those, who are gone before us, as their faces drew nearer to the borders of eternity.

We have no need to see Stephen looking upward, and to hear his word of the living Jesus there: we have had others, near and dear to us, with whom we have taken sweet counsel together upon many a day of life, and whose glad departures our own eyes have seen. They are assurance of the completion of God's long-designed plan, and of its blessed result to every seeking soul. We are ready to join them, to share their realized promises, to enter upon the places prepared for us—when it shall please God—when God shall have prepared us in the power of His Spirit for that better land.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

BEST EVIDENCE—NUMBERLESS OTHERS—GOSPEL SUPPORT—QUOTATIONS BY HERETICS AND HEATHEN—PROVED GOSPEL, PROVED BIBLE—OTHERS—SIN—DEGRADATION OF RACE—UNITY OF MAN—FLOOD—MEASURES OF TIME—PROPHETIC DESTINIES—PHOTOGRAPHY—ACCIDENTS—GOD'S TIME—SERGIUS PAULUS—PHILIPPI—FEARLESS WAITING—BASEMENT OF TEMPLE—BETHESDA—STILL, SELF-PROOF BEST.

WHILST the Lord God has made us all of one blood, He has made us all to differ one from another—the unity of our common nature entirely preserved amidst the infinite variety of form, of feature, and of disposition. He has been pleased, also, to adapt His mode of teaching to this endless variation of mind, whilst its substance is still one—existing sin and a finished atonement; and of all the evidences, which His universe affords to this lesson, there is none so convincing as this self-proof.

There are, of course, numberless others.

Creation, revelation, providence, having a common purpose, in whichever way we look upon the works of God, we shall find the same Mind. We might take, for example, the manner in which one portion of revelation admits of external proof; and, then, remind ourselves, that to prove a part is to prove the whole. Our New Testament, for example, grasps all contemporary history to pour out its evidence. We may trace back quotations from the several books, age after age, to the age of the apostles themselves; the people, whose writings we quote, being not always Christians, but heretics and heathen, who quoted the Scriptures, as the heretic and the heathen do now, to shew misconception of its plainest meaning; and these adversaries are the safest witnesses to the real date and genuineness of the Scriptures, which they opposed: they are doing God's work, as the Jews did, when they compelled the parents of the born blind to come and prove the blindness; as the chief priests did, when they claimed from Pilate a seal and a guard for the body of Jesus; as every opponent of God, of every age, shall only be overruled,

like Caiaphas, to the fulfilment of God's loving will towards mankind. These quotations are so manifold, that one might almost recompose some books, were they lost, from the extracted passages found in other writings. And this goes on day by day. Heresy and war have swept over many a land, which abounded in manuscript versions of the Scriptures and in writings by the men of early Christian days; and Christian men are constantly occupied in searching out these manuscripts. We care not whence they come, nor what they are. Whether they have been written over some yet more ancient heathen writer, whose lost work we recover at the same time with the more precious one, which affects us; or whether we recover it from beneath the writing of some ambitious man, who has thought his comments worth more than the treasure which he concealed; we throw eagerly into the public treasury of knowledge any fragment of Christian antiquity, which may be thus obtained; glad to know that the talent and learning of the whole world will be turned to scrutinize the genuineness of the discovered writing, and that

thus some new fact *will* arise to support God's truth and to extend God's glory. Ancient and independent versions of the Scriptures, possessed by ancient and independent Christian churches, are beautifully confirmatory one of another, as Christian meets Christian with the full assurance of the reality of a common truth, seeking merely by the comparison of texts to clear some trifling obscurity over some trifling detail. As Paley has practically suggested, it is enough, that Burnet quotes Clarendon, to know that Clarendon had written when Burnet wrote; but our witnesses are men of different countries, languages, and religions.

And, then, when our numberless witnesses have shewn the authenticity of the Gospel and its facts, the Gospel is but the realization and fulfilment of the old covenant, which has remained always in the custody of one people under the surest evidence of preserved integrity. In proving the new covenant, we prove the old: the two are in the most perfect harmony—a harmony of impossible construction, unless men of all ages and nations could have combined for a

common end—the evidence upon which each rests is supplied by people utterly separated by time and distance.

And, yet, this is merely one view of one line of evidence; whilst, as we have said, all history and all nature must, *of necessity*, support and confirm revelation. *All* God's works shall, and must, praise their Author; all His works were known unto Him from the foundation of the world, and were all conceived in unison: one Mind can only produce unity of purpose. We may rapidly survey some of the modes, in which the existing world bears its never-ceasing testimony to God's truth.

I. The great fact of human sin stands stamped upon the whole world; and there is no other way, in which the fact can be accounted for, but that which God has given. Numbers of God's creatures have denied the fact; but each one's heart and life have set to their seal, that God is true. Many a schemer has asserted that man's nature is perfectible under careful self-improvement; but human passions have broken out to mock the chains, which man had made for them.

And God has put one sure mark upon His truth, which no human art, no human power, can touch. He, who alone states the cause of the disease of sin, can alone cure it. Men may, like the magicians of Egypt, reproduce and multiply the evil, but they are powerless over the weakest passion of the human heart. God declares, that, when the evil first began, He promised a remedy; and that one remedy alone we see to avail, to remove sin from man's heart. No man, but the man who asks God to cleanse it, ceases to have a bad heart, and to shew it in a bad life *in some way:* every one, without exception of country, rank, or age, who brings his heart to God, becomes a new creature—finds that there is forgiveness of sin by the fact, that he has power to put away his sin.

Every age and every country offers, also, a practical proof of the manner, in which a race deteriorates by a parent's fall. The fact is constantly before ourselves in the records of our police courts and of our criminal trials. Let a few years of sin pass over one whom, we have

known in the best society of our civilized land; and we can scarcely recognize the degraded form, still less the traces of early refinement; and the next generation will shew us the gentle blood yet more vilely debased; so that our hearers almost doubt us, as we point out the grandchild of one, who once influenced the councils of his country by his position, or by his talents.

II. The unity of race is one point of proof for our Scripture narrative, which used to be matter for discussion in earlier days, but which has been long since settled. That the African and the Asiatic, the savage under his varied form of cannibal and log worshipper, should have had a common parentage with ourselves has startled many a cultivated mind; and, happily for us, the matter has been taken up, canvassed, and settled by an unbeliever, bound by his love of science to bring out the truth. And there is no truth more useful to us. It is bad enough for human pride as we see a criminal die, to feel with the martyr, "There go I, but for the grace of God;" but to see our humanity under the altered form of an

Australasian, a Boschman, or an Aztec, is to have clear ideas of the nature and the power of that sin, which exists in our own hearts.

III. The flood, as an event, which affected the whole world, is one which all history attests; especially the history of those lands, wherein dwelt the few saved people. And this is an expanding proof. The deluge left its marks upon the flooded world; and, as science pursues its researches, those marks will be more generally recognized and understood.

IV. The measures, which are set upon time, are amongst the most sure evidences, that the world was created by a designing God; and that the design is such, as He has spoken. We see how the day is made by the earth's movement; how the months are formed by the attendant satellite of our earth; how the year results from our similar attendance on the sun; and we know all these as following upon the laws, by which these bodies were made to be governed. God tells us, that they were so made "for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years," (Gen. i. 14;) and we feel the kindness, as well as the

wisdom, of the appointment. Had time *not* been measured out to us in this preparatory world, our little river of life would soon have flowed again into the sea of eternity, and we should have been little schooled in our preparation for the world to come.

These are not, however, all the divisions of time: we find yet another marked upon all ages, and marked even upon created beings. The seventh day is everywhere a period; and this fact is shewn as a needful law: the careless man, so far as his soul is concerned, finds that the care of his money requires for his cattle a weekly rest, without which they, as his property, are soon worn out and lost: the refuse of the clever Saxon race, united in a horrid thirst for mere gold, indulging every animal passion to the extent of unchecked theft and murder, find that if the gold hunter is to live, he must have his weekly rest: a whole nation, setting God at defiance, and during a brief intoxication of unexampled sinfulness denying His being, retains the rest, which He had made those very creatures to need, even whilst they affect to despise His

power by altering its duration: the Sabbath has no better evidence than the overworkings of our metropolis, the forced rest of California, the decade of revolution. And all this is corroboration of Scripture, where we find the seventh day *made* by the six days' creation, and hallowed for the entire world.

V. Another constantly accumulating line of evidence lies in the prophecies, which have gone forth respecting certain people and certain districts. Our Bible is specially the history of God's people; first, as collected by Moses, and, secondly, as united in the Prophet like unto Moses; but, as this people fulfilled its purpose, it became intermingled with all other nations. Sometimes God sent forth His people to execute a sentence upon those who had rejected Him; sometimes that very same cause brought other nations as "the sword of the Lord" upon His people; and, even after the manifestation of His Christ, some folds of His flock had a foreseen fall. And, thus, at very varied periods of the world's being, during a course of years numbered by hundreds and by thousands, the future

state of countries and of cities without number has been described, from condemned Sodom, and Nineveh, and Babylon, and Edom, and Tyre, even down to Laodicea and Ephesus. There are the words, unchanged, unchangeable. No man could alter them, no man could fulfil them. And it has pleased God in His providence to bring His fulfilled prophecies before our very eyes, in a manner that the last age could not have understood. Thousands of miles stretch out between us and these scenes of prophecy; and the willing unbeliever would speak of traveller's tales; whilst some one, half hope, half doubt, might long for the glass of Eastern story, which would set the distant scene before the present eye. And this wild wish God has granted. The photograph, the sun picture, gives us the very scene of prophecy. There stands the lofty arch, of which no history tells us the architect: there lies the column, of which no history records the storm that laid it low: there is the huge mound under which a city has been buried for ages: here is the Word of God which said, that that place should be *as it is;* and the same eye sees

the place as it is, and the word which said it should be long before it was: God's word and God's act speak together to the eye of His creature, and no external evidence can pass the combination.

VI. Of all external evidences, however, the best are those which accident—as we usually call God's arranging providence—perpetually offers. It is but an accident, men say, that brings a soul within hearing of the word, by which it is converted and saved; and it is the same kind of accident, which makes a man stumble upon some ancient inscription, or which provokes his obstinacy by the difficulty of decipherment; and which thus, through his patience, forms a flood of light upon old darkness. It is the same kind of accident, which leaves an objection to Scripture unanswerable for years, or ages, and thus tries the faith of every man living within that period, and then brings up some fragment of proof so suddenly, and yet so surely, that all may say, "This hath God done." The rocks of Sinai are covered with unknown characters, which are shewn, in God's time, to refer

to the wanderings of God's people; the sculptures of Egypt have their day of development, and they carry on the wars of the people of Canaan, until the period when Israel took possession of their land and swept them away, or made them tributary—no longer a people to contend with Egypt. Nineveh and Babylon have hidden their records for ages, and surrounded them, like the treasures of fable, with pathless deserts and with varied kinds of danger; and now God speaks the word, and the earth casts forth her dead—Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius, bursting from the grave to tell us their acts as living men.

And so, as time rolls on, its stream uncovers more and more of the covered past. Israel was gone into a strange land, whither no eye could follow them, where they seemed hidden from every eye; but the right time came, and they were found just where the old history had left them, careful of their law, jealous in its observance, and ignorant of all that had been done to Judah, and of all prophecy later than their exile.

And in these developements, we have continual illustration of the nature of the God, with whom we have to do, and to whom great and little have no relation: the evidence is often most valuable on account of its insignificance. As, *e. g.*, the truthfulness of Scripture was doubted, because Sergius Paulus was described as "deputy" (Acts xiii. 7) at Cyprus; that government not being one for a man of the rank implied by the word, so translated. What could a poor Christian say with all learning against him? How many a man resting his belief on man would have been shaken! But, *in God's time*, a coin of Cyprus appears of that very age, bearing on it the very condemned word. The unbeliever would be unaffected one way, or the other, as he would probably be gone to his account before the revelation; but how would the weak Christian be self-convicted, who had listened to man rather than to God! And precisely a similar occurrence took place with reference to Luke's description of Philippi as a colony: all heathen history disowned the colony; and the Christian could only wait; but the wait-

ing Christian found his final support; the coin of Philippi proving the colony, as that of Cyprus had attested the deputy! How magnificent a sight of the Godhead! to see Him leaving His truth unproved before the whole of His creatures, challenging the faith of millions upon His unsupported Word, and then supporting the faith of all His people, and vindicating His universal Deity by a square inch of metal!

Day after day passes onwards with perpetual illustrations still offering, as God sees it right to give them. And, as we speak of the Christian, as eagerly searching for every manuscript, which might be found in any dark corner of any land, satisfied that all fresh knowledge will only more clearly illustrate and confirm all that God has said; so the Christian is constantly alive to every scientific research, into either the facts, or the laws, of nature. He has no fears, that anything can be found, which will be inconsistent with any portion of God's teaching. God revealed only because He had made; and all His works of any kind must be in perfect harmony.

The Christian does, indeed, fear for any fellow-being, who is in haste to theorize upon half-knowledge, or to be proud over some petty discovery. It seems to man a splendid thing, that he should so calculate the effects upon each other of the worlds around us, that he should feel as it were in space an undiscovered world, and prove its being and its place before it was dragged into sight; but he had been six thousand years doing this, during all which time the discovered world was a hidden atom in the universe of God. It seems to man a proud thing to give his name to some theory upon God's governing laws; when the pride is, as often, in a theory, which fresh light explodes; and when the laws, after which he blindly gropes, were the simple conceptions of the eternal mind for all coming time. The Christian, however, sees the danger of being bewildered by one's own miserable light, merely because it is close to one's own eyes; and he is looking out constantly and earnestly for that fresh light, which is unceasingly given out by God's providence. Jerusalem is still, in fulfilment of her sentence, trodden

down of the Gentiles; but some fragment of light is frequently given out from the very walls held by the unbelievers.* Not long since, an artist, merely seeking materials for his pencil, crept into the forbidden buildings, which cover Mount Zion; and was thus permitted to tread the basement, to all appearance, of the old Temple, and to gaze upon those enormous stones, of which not one stone was left upon another of all the upper building. And, even in the present year, a zealous missionary among the Jews seems to have fallen upon the lost Sheepgate, and to have determined the real Bethesda.†

Still, varied and accumulated as external evidence is, the internal evidence is the most satisfactory. The Bible is one book; and, yet, as we have seen, it has been given forth by its Author through a great many human instruments, living ages distant from each other, living in different countries, and speaking different lan-

* See notes to Traill's *Josephus*.

† Mr. E. R. Hodges appears, so far as present evidence goes, to have really made, in a morning walk, this interesting discovery.

guages. The book begins by describing the want in which revelation arose; and closes by describing the want supplied; and, during the whole of the several thousand years, which the book comprises, no man appears to have spoken, but in connexion with some other man, who was not upon the world at the same time as himself. The living soul and the dust, that had been man, could little conspire together; and yet the community of work and the identity of object are constant between those, who never met until they met, as did Moses and Elias at the transfiguration. And, as in the material world, the mind of the governing Godhead is most marked in the direction of small particulars, it is in the minute coincidences of detached portions of revelation, that one feels the most convincing assurance of God's immediate interest and power. The beautiful little epigram, which speaks of the crushed gnat as a work beyond all human art, the work of omnipotence; and all the wonderful deductions, which follow from some broken stone which bears the impress of an extinct animal; these still refer to matter, or to animal life; but

the scattered coincidences of the Bible are fragments of *reason*, fragments of *mind*, portions of the intellect by which God marked man as made in His own image; and to gather up these scattered fragments, and to see their unity, is one of the most interesting, as well as one of the most assuring, employments, which man can have. It is easily done, if any seek to awaken his mind to the nature of that evidence, of which we have endeavoured to shew the force, but which cannot be fully understood without personal research. Let any portion of the Bible be taken, which seems difficult, or any two passages which seem at variance; and, then, let the mind dwell quietly upon them as God's word, and follow out the references from passage to passage, as memory, or as some guide, may suggest; and not only will light gradually come in upon the dark passage, but the light will shew its connexion with the body of revelation. It is thus that so many have been awakened and brought to God by a single text. The very strangeness of the text arrested the attention, until by degrees the true meaning became apparent, and the word an-

swered the purpose, for which it had been brought to the hearing of that special ear.

And this mode of self-proof, which the Bible offers to its own truth, is as practical, as any other evidence of God's being and presence. Combined revelation is like the thunders of Sinai, from which the human nature shrank appalled: the nature of the Deity, as displayed in the great scheme, with its enormous spaces for prophecy and fulfilment, overwhelms the mind, and so humbles the creature, that he shrinks from the presence of his God. As we look more closely at the Bible, and read in it the narrative of such things, as we see God to do before us every day, we see in the less details of the Bible traces of the same God, as He, who provides us day by day our daily bread. He *is* the same God, who spoke from Mount Sinai, and who is still "a consuming fire" to those, who oppose and reject His offices of love; but it is not His pleasure *so* to be known by *us*. He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son; and every fulfilled fragment of His word only assures us of His continued care over us.

We can no longer think our Heavenly Father indifferent to us, as we find how guarded is every word, which He has written for our learning; and, as we learn more to fear ourselves, we learn, also, more to put our trust in Him.

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